







SIR PHEROZESHAH MEHTA  
A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY







Sir Pherozeshah in 1911

# SIR "PHEROZESHAH MEHTA

A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

by

HOMI MODY



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INSCRIBED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
M Y D E A R B R O T H E R R U S T A M  
WHO DIED AT BOMBAY ON  
THE 17 JULY, 1917, DEEPLY  
REGRETTED BY ALL WHO KNEW  
HIM AND RECOGNISED HIS  
TALENTS AND NOBILITY OF  
CHARACTER



## FOREWORD

IT is with great reluctance that I have accepted the author's kind invitation to write this Foreword, for I am well aware of my shortcomings for the task. Unlike many others happily still alive, I did not get to know Sir Pherozeshah till the very evening of his life. Thus I had little direct knowledge of that great period when he helped to mould Indian political aspirations. Nor had I the advantage of co-operation with him in his great work of making Bombay a self-governing city. Under these circumstances a great deal that could have been rightly said must be passed in silence. However I can claim one advantage over his contemporaries, and that is that I see the giant in truer perspective. While I was still a boy, Sir Pherozeshah, with his well-known generosity, would often spend half an hour or so explaining to my youthful curiosity the governing principle underlying his political convictions and activities. Later, from the time when he last visited London onwards, I saw him more often, and came more and more to understand the grandeur and simplicity of his character and to appreciate the qualities that had won for him, I must say, the discipleship of men so different and yet so powerful and strong as Gokhale and Ranade, Budrudin and Wacha.\* Nay, it was characteristic of Sir Pherozeshah that his influence guided men older than himself who had been in the political field much longer, and it also spurred the young patriots to further aspirations. Such was the case with Dadabhai Naoroji himself, and with many others whose names are dear to India.

It is one of the tragedies of Indian history since British Rule that Sir Pherozeshah was never understood or appreciated by officialdom and Anglo-India. Had his doctrines been followed earlier, we might not have such a dark and cloudy atmosphere as overhangs the land today. Sir Pherozeshah's real place was in the category of Rhodes, but alas, unlike the great South African leader, his teaching was

\* It would be incorrect to describe Ranade and Budrudin as Pherozeshah's disciples. Ranade occupied a distinct place of his own in public life, while Budrudin was a close colleague and collaborator.—Author.

appreciated by those who had the power to apply it successfully thirty years too late. Had the principles and the hopes with which in the Eighties he took his stand on Indian aspirations been even gradually realized, had they even received fair and unprejudiced consideration, the later and final estrangement of Tilak and Gandhi would probably never have taken place. Not only the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, but even the more elementary rights, came far too late, for those vital years of the Eighties and Nineties had left such an atmosphere of distrust that it has weighed down the final work of reconciliation foreshadowed in the famous declaration of August 1917. A moral that no Englishman in India should forget can be drawn from the fact that for forty-five out of his seventy years of life Sir Pherozeshah was for the average Anglo-Indian the personification of a dangerous demagogue. His great qualities, his loyal imperialism, his patriotism alike as an Indian and as an Imperialist, his readiness to see that the two duties and the two affections were complementary and not contradictory—all these were realized long after the realization had any practical value. Had any of the administrative and financial reforms suggested by the Mehta of the Eighties and Nineties received fair and just consideration, would the present day patriotism and incredulity separate the thinking youth of India from England?

But for young India too there is a moral. Sir Pherozeshah never despaired, and till the very end believed in the conscience of England. All the rebuffs and disappointments of four decades and more did not sour his large and generous nature. One other and a still more necessary moral can be drawn by the India of the future from this, perhaps, her greatest nineteenth century son. It was the breadth and depth of his true charity for his countrymen; for he never judged harshly or unkindly even the meanest of his own worldly antagonists. Personal ambition, the desire for wealth and fame never interfered with his great work in life. I have known in my time many leading statesmen, men of letters, men to whom fame has come in many lands. Some like Gokhale had avowedly renounced the world. Not one can I recall whose real indifference to personal advancement or success was so great as Sir Pherozeshah's. Not only in old age would he open his arms to welcome a Gokhale

as his successor, but before he had himself reached the meridian of life, he was never jealous but ever ready to advance a possible rival such as Telang or Budrudin, Ranade or Chandavarkar. All he insisted on, all he demanded, was that the Motherland should receive a recruit sincere and devoted to her cause. In a land of divisions of caste and religion, of race and occupation, of provincial interests and religious differences, Sir Pherozeshah in his very life perhaps unconsciously showed the greatest synthesis of patriotism and particularism. A Parsi of Parsis, who could never be mistaken for any other race, who was proud of every quality which has gone to distinguish that ancient people, he was yet an Indian of Indians ever looking forward to a future worthy of India's population and resources and not handicapped by her past misfortunes. A Bombayite passionately devoted to his city and to his Presidency, yet he was the standard-bearer of the cause of United India. His simple nature was so free from hypocrisy and conceit that while he could admire the renunciation of Gokhale and the sacrifices of B. G. Tilak, he never realized that while he had not taken any such vows or made any such declaration, he had made in his own life perhaps the greatest sacrifice of all. I have heard of him in his last years as being regarded as a dead weight to the cause of Indian progress. Nothing could be more false. His was not a nature to be satisfied with half measures. The full goal of Dominion self-government within the Empire was as clear to him as to any other patriotic son of India, but again the strength of his practical nature gave him such patience that without forgetting the beacon in the distance, he could see the thorns that made the path difficult and dangerous.

These were the great outstanding qualities that impressed themselves more and more on me from my last meeting with him in London in 1910 until my final interview in Bombay in 1915. With age, his political wisdom and sagacity seemed to gain direction and strength, and had he been spared but a few years longer, he would have become the leader of the constitutional opposition, a party of criticism and power that would, with the awakened India of today, have made her advance to full self-government, if not easier, surer and more certain.



## PREFACE

THIS work was undertaken in 1916. Many circumstances have combined to delay its execution, chief among them being the want of suitable materials, and the difficulty of access to such contemporary records as are in existence. The papers placed at my disposal by Lady Mehta consisted almost entirely of letters written to Sir Pherozeshah by various people. There were some thousands of them, all preserved by him without any regard to their importance, tradesmen's circulars, invitation notes and confidential letters from political associates finding their way into the same capacious drawer. As against this vast mass of materials, most of it entirely useless, I could not lay hands on even half a dozen letters written by Sir Pherozeshah himself, and was thus deprived of what would have been the best of materials for this biography. Added to these difficulties was the fact that I could not at any time within these five years get away from the daily round of duties which tie most of us down. A greater part of the work had to be written in odd hours of leisure in an atmosphere scarcely conducive to concentration of thought or quiet reflection.

The trouble I have encountered in gathering materials has been the least of my difficulties. Nor has the writing of seven hundred pages been very much of an effort. To borrow the language of Lord Morley, "though the subject was inspiring, it was no occasion for high attempts in literary expression." The real difficulty was of another kind. To quote Lord Morley again, "the first quality required was architectonic; it lay in distribution of periods and phases, the right scale for a thousand episodes, right proportions among wide and varied fields of incessant public policy and personal activity." To produce an ordered impression within the compass of a few hundred pages of the career and personality of a man who was supreme in so many fields, in the Congress, the Councils, the Corporation and the Senate, for over a generation, and whose activities on the platform were incessant, has been no easy task. How far I have succeeded, others must judge.

One of the essential conditions of a good biography is that it must be honest. While the predominant note must be one of sympathy, blind and undiscriminating partisanship must be scrupulously avoided. In the record which I have presented, I have attempted to temper admiration with discernment and to criticize such actions of the hero as have appeared to me indefensible or arising from error of judgment. It would have been strange indeed if I had sought to make out that a long and many-sided life, spent in an atmosphere of continual conflict, had been altogether free from the mistakes and miscalculations to which all human judgment is liable. While I may thus claim to have written in a spirit of detachment, it is possible that my intense admiration for the politics and personality of Sir Pherozeshah may have led me on occasions into taking the view most favourable to him, though I have endeavoured to guard against the danger by placing the two sides of every question before the reader.

Several friends of Pherozeshah have helped me in the compilation of this biography. My principal obligations are to the Aga Khan for his great kindness in contributing a very thoughtful and admirable little Foreword; to Sir Dinshaw Wacha for the many valuable suggestions I have received from him from time to time, and for the personal interest he has taken in the biography of one to whom he bore a deep and life-long attachment; to Mr. C. M. Cursetjee for furnishing me with many interesting and useful notes on Pherozeshah's career and personality, which his close and intimate friendship of more than forty years particularly qualified him to supply, and for devoting considerable pains over the revision of the proofs, and to Sir H. A. Wadya for giving me some little-known details about the early part of Pherozeshah's career. To Sir Stanley Reed, I owe a special debt of gratitude for all the invaluable assistance he has rendered me, as much, I believe, out of admiration for Pherozeshah's personality as kindness to myself. He has allowed me to encroach very freely on his time and energies, and the book owes a great deal to the many valuable hints and criticisms I have received from him from time to time. I must not forget one who played a less important but none the less useful rôle. Finding it impossible to undertake the task of gathering materials single-handed, I engaged

Mr. J. C. Mehd to look up such newspaper files and other material as we have in our miserably-equipped libraries, and to cull out everything relating to the subject of the biography. He has done the work with an ability and conscientiousness which have considerably lightened my task. In addition, he has typed all my manuscripts, and has generally rendered himself very useful. It was trying work at best, and the manner in which he has done it deserves every praise. My grateful thanks are also due to Mr. Ramarao P. Desai, Deputy Municipal Secretary, for compiling the Index. I greatly appreciate the trouble he has taken and the competence with which he has carried out the task.

The book has been a labour of love to me. My object in undertaking to write it was two-fold. I found that our literature, English and Indian, did not contain a single biography adequately recording the life and life-work of an Indian, though during the last hundred years, this country has produced many men of outstanding eminence; and I was anxious to supply the deficiency, if I could. My second object was to present a full and complete record of a career altogether unique in our political history, and to give, if such a thing were possible, a connected account of the principal events and movements of the last fifty years. How far I have fallen short of the ideal which I have set before myself, I am perfectly conscious; I can only hope that the critic may prove right who says it is very difficult to make a complete failure with a good subject. I trust I have not quite surmounted that difficulty! Encouraged by that thought, I lay down the pen with a feeling of relief; yet not without a sense of regret do I part from a work which has almost formed part and parcel of my being for the better part of five long years.

HOMI MODY



## PREFACE TO THE RE-PRINT

THE story of the life and labours of the pioneers of the national movement in our country should be a source of pride and inspiration to every Indian. In the face of the hostility of large sections of the educated classes and the indifference of the masses, they fought with courage and determination to end the political domination and economic exploitation of India by an all powerful Raj, and created the awakening which set her on the road to self-government.

With the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the political scene, a new chapter of British Indian history opened, and all that had gone before appeared to lose its significance. The memory of the men who had laboured so long for India's political emancipation began to fade fast, and to the public mind it seemed as if the fight for freedom had really started with the Gandhian era. It seemed sad that the past should be so forgotten, but in a way it was inevitable.

Of late, however, there has been a welcome change of outlook and a revival of interest in the earlier stages of the struggle for freedom, beginning with the Seventies of the last century. The movement which began with Dadabhai Naoroji and was carried to a triumphant conclusion by Gandhiji is being seen as a continuous process of evolution, and some well-written biographies of the older generation of leaders have come out, in response to a growing public demand. When, therefore, the Asia Publishing House offered to re-print my biography of Pherozeshah Mehta, I readily consented.

The book, now appearing in one volume, is a reproduction of my Biography of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, published in 1921, barring a little condensation and such changes in the language as appeared to me to be called for. I have made no attempt to view the men and events of the time in the light of the revolutionary changes that have since taken place.

In preparing the re-print, I have been greatly assisted by Mr. T. V. Parvate, a well known author, who has written excellent biographies of Tilak, Gokhale and Ranade. He has gone through the text of the two volumes with commendable thoroughness and made

a number of valuable suggestions, for which I am very grateful to him.

I hope the portrait here presented of the most outstanding political leader of his time may serve once more to recall to the public the measure of his achievements and the historic significance of the events of his time.

HOMI MODY

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Sir Pherozeshah Mehta in 1911

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Gathering at the First Indian National Congress, 1885

Reception Committee, Fifth Indian National Congress

*(Between pages 128 and 129)*

In academic gown

Sir Pherozeshah, Surendranath Bannerji and Dinshaw Wacha

*(Between pages 208 and 209)*

In a Parsi cap—At a hill station

*(Between pages 352 and 353)*



## CHAPTER I

### EARLY YEARS

1845-1864

OF the early years of the lives of eminent Indians very little is known as a rule. Nor, as circumstances exist at present, would a narration of them evoke much interest or possess any special value. It will be necessary, therefore, to skip lightly over the opening pages of the life-story of the remarkable Indian who is the subject of this biography.

Pherozeshah Mehta was born in Bombay on 4 August 1845. His father was a merchant who spent most of his life in Calcutta, and was at one time a partner in the well-known firm of P. & C. N. Camap & Co., which with many other business houses came to grief in the Share Mania of 1865. He was a man of means at the period of which we are speaking, and was able to bring up his children in comfort. Though not endowed with any education worth the name, he possessed some literary tastes, and was the author of a text-book on Geography and a Gujarati translation of some work on Chemistry. His brother Sorabji was a man of considerable ability, who held a responsible position in a banking concern, and was keenly interested in the social and educational questions of the day. The family lived in one of the localities in the Fort which were in those days inhabited by the wealthiest in the community, and most of which are now known only for their squalor and general indications of poverty. It is not necessary to delve deeper than this into the family history in order to trace influences of heredity or environment, which, as a present-day critic says, are often a snare to the biographer.

When he was about seven years old, Pherozeshah was taken seriously ill from a malignant fever. For days together, he lay unconscious and his life was despaired of. Dr. Bhau Daji, the celebrated physician, attributed the particular nature of the child's malady to his quick and restless brain, and remarked that if he

recovered, he would turn out to be a great man, a prophecy which had also been made by his uncle Sorabji on seeing the child's forehead when he was in the cradle. After days of agonizing suspense, family tradition runs, the little patient suddenly woke up one day, bitterly crying. When asked for the reason, he sobbed that he had seen his grandmother in a garden full of flowers, and that she had given him a push and turned him out. The old folks in the family regarded it as a happy omen, and from that moment the child began to recover.

Pherozeshah's early education began in what was known as Ayrton's school. This was an institution established by Mr. Dhunjibhoy Cama, one of the partners of the elder Mehta, and honoured with the name of Ayrton, who was the family solicitor of the Camas, and who took a great interest in the education of boys. In those days, though there was not so much general intercourse between Englishmen and Indians as exists at present, there was much more of genuine friendship between individuals, and manifestations of friendly regard like the above were not unusual. In many cases the Parsis of those days adopted the surnames of their patrons or friends, and were known by the latter.

From Ayrton's school, Pherozeshah went in 1855 to that well-known institution which was known as the "Branch School," the cradle of many distinguished men who have made history in Bombay. After six happy years spent in an irresponsible and happy-go-lucky way, characteristic of all healthy-minded schoolboys, he passed the Matriculation, which had been instituted soon after the great charter of education of 1854 was brought into operation. Shortly after, he joined the Elphinstone College, then located in a place at Gowalia Tank Road, known as "Tankerville." It was an old and unpretentious building, immediately adjoining a large tank now filled in, but the grounds were spacious and full of trees. The surroundings were pleasant, and compared favourably with present-day conditions.

Of Pherozeshah's life at College, there is not much to be said. He was a keen and diligent student, particularly fond of history and English literature, and showed himself to be endowed with a mind of unusual capacity. His personality was striking. Though of little

more than medium height, his strong and handsome features and broad shoulders lent considerable dignity and impressiveness to his general appearance. His conversation was brilliant, and drew towards him a large circle of friends. Among them were several, who in after years stood with him on the same platform on many an occasion, and fought under his banner. Young Pherozeshah also became a favourite with the great educationist who was at the head of the institution, Sir Alexander Grant. One of the essays written by him so impressed the latter that it was ordered to be preserved in the archives of the College from which some devoted disciple may some day unearth it.

The culture imparted in those days was in many respects sounder, and took deeper root than modern conditions allow. The pupils were few and they came closely and directly under the influence of singularly able and conscientious teachers. Pherozeshah made the most of his opportunities. In the annual reports which were sent to his father over the signature of Sir Alexander, his conduct and progress were described as excellent. He was quick at grasping the salient points of the subject before him, but avoided the short cuts to knowledge which such facility often encourages. He belonged to that somewhat rare type of men in whom great natural advantages are found allied with a capacity for taking pains.

While the cultivation of the mind was promoted in every way, the development of the body was not neglected. Though little inclined to any vigorous physical exertion, Pherozeshah was fond of cricket, and played a great deal of what was then a little known game. He is said to have played in characteristic fashion, never knowing when he was defeated. Sir Alexander was himself fond of the game, and encouraged its pursuit among his pupils. On one occasion, he even took a team with him to the Deccan, Pherozeshah forming one of the Eleven. In after years, at College and other convivial gatherings, when old days were recalled with affection, Pherozeshah took a whimsical delight in claiming that he was one of the pioneers of the game, and in disputing with the late Mr. Jam-setjee Patel, his title as the Father of Indian Cricket, contending that long before the latter emerged on the scene, he and his contemporaries, proud of their bats and stumps which had been made by a

native carpenter, used to indulge in the game in the *maidan* outside the ramparts of the old Fort, which had guarded the little town for generations, and which later had to be demolished with the rise of modern Bombay.

Those years at College were well spent. They taught the young man to stand upright; they certainly fostered no "slave mentality." They were devoted to the cultivation of a mind which was very receptive, and to the pursuit of a healthy out-door life. The opportunities for the acquisition of culture which existed in those days, the attention that it was possible to bestow on each student, and the sympathetic understanding which existed between the professors and their pupils, all contributed to bring out the best that was in a man, and in such an atmosphere Pherozeshah's intellect ripened early. He had the rare advantage, besides, of coming under the influence of Sir Alexander Grant's inspiring personality, and the value of this early association he repeatedly acknowledged in after years.

In 1864, Pherozeshah passed his B.A. examination, and was awarded a Dakshina Fellowship by Sir Alexander, who was anxious to retain his connection with the College. About this time, he received a compliment which was as rare as it was gratifying in those days. Sir Bartle Frere, having heard about him, was desirous of meeting him, and asked him to an interview at Government House. What transpired at the interview is not known.

A few months later, an event of far-reaching importance took place in the life of Pherozeshah. The late Mr. Rustomji Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, the second son of the first Parsi Baronet, and a man of remarkably enlightened views and catholic philanthropy, had offered in December, 1863, a sum of Rs. 1,50,000 in trust "to enable five natives of India to proceed to England for the purpose of qualifying themselves for practice at the Bar in India." The scholarships were to be open to a Parsi, a Hindu and a Portuguese in Bombay, and a Mohamedan and a Hindu or East Indian from Calcutta or Madras, "all of good family connections, occupying a respectable position in society." The donor had further laid down that in making the selection, "the good moral character of the respective parties must be an indispensable qualification, and not merely abilities alone." For each selected candidate the handsome

provision of Rs. 30,000 was made, which included a sum of Rs. 10,000 to be presented to him on his qualifying himself as a barrister and producing a certificate of his good moral conduct during his residence in England. Such were the terms of the generous offer made by Mr. Rustomji Jamsetjee, a man whose charity was as wide and catholic as that of his illustrious father—as an instance of which might be mentioned his generous donation for the relief of Lancashire operatives at the time of the American Civil War—and who, it is related, had in the hey-day of his prosperity set apart the princely sum of Rs. 51 lacs for the benefit of the poor of his community. The downfall of this singularly enlightened and large-hearted citizen was one of the greatest tragedies of the Share Mania of 1865.

When applications were invited for the scholarship, Sir Alexander induced Pherozeshah to put forward his candidature, though his father had some misgivings about the propriety of his son accepting the benefit of a charitable trust, and wanted him to adopt a commercial career. Sir Alexander pointed out that it was in fact an honour to be selected as a candidate, and the elder Mehta gave in. It is interesting to note, as throwing a sidelight on the early conditions of Indian life, that not one Hindu came forward in Bombay to take the benefit of this magnificent provision. As Pherozeshah said some three years later in the course of a lecture before the East India Association, “the uneducated were withheld by the prejudices of caste and country, and the educated did not care to break abruptly some of the most sacred social and family ties, especially when the means of enlightenment were, to a certain extent, near at their hands.” In forwarding this gifted pupil’s application, the eminent educationist wrote in terms of warm appreciation of his talents and character :

I have great pleasure in testifying that Mr. Pherozeshah Merwanji is in every way worthy of the benefaction which he seeks. He is on the whole the best student of all I have had to do with in the Elphinstone College. He has good abilities, industry, good sense, modesty, an excellent moral character, and remarkably gentlemanly and pleasing manners. From much association

with him on the cricket field as well as in the lecture room, I can testify to his manliness and courage, which I think the committee will consider valuable qualifications. I beg you will lay before them this letter, and say to them with all respect that should their choice fall upon Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta, I should cordially congratulate the honourable founder of this benefaction on the worthy character of the young man selected to represent himself and the Parsee community in England.

The choice of the committee happily fell upon Pherozeshah—in Calcutta the late Mr. W. C. Bonnerji was selected—and as Sir Alexander was going to England in December 1864, and was desirous of taking his pupil with him, the latter was allowed as a special grace to appear for his M.A. within six months of his passing the B.A. examination. The task was not an easy one, but those who knew him felt sure of his success. Their confidence was justified, and Pherozeshah became one of the first M.A.'s of the Bombay University. More exciting than the examination, however, was the prospect of his impending departure. He was going out to a new and wonderful world about which he had read and dreamt a great deal. The gifts with which he had been so amply endowed by Nature were to find the fullest scope for development, and the future seemed bright and full of hope. After weeks of preparation befitting the importance of the occasion—a visit to Europe was looked on as a bit of an adventure in those days—Pherozeshah sailed for England in December, 1864. Accompanying him was another Elphinstonian, Mr., now Sir, Hormasji Wadya, whose success as a lawyer in the mofussil later brought him in frequent contact with his old friend, with whom he fought many a legal battle in Kathiawar and other places. On the eve of their departure, their fellow-students at the College presented them with a farewell address. It was an unpretentious document written on a plain sheet of paper, and couched in simple language, but it bore the names of many who in after years attained to eminence in various walks of life, such as Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Bal Mangesh Wagle, Rahimtulla Mohamed Sayani and Goculdas Kahandas Parekh. The address referred to the brilliant career of the two young men, and expressed a hope that as the

benefaction had attracted candidates from Madras and Calcutta, they would carry themselves not only as Elphinstonians, but as representing the whole of the Presidency. The presentation of the address with its simple but stimulating message was a happy idea, and the document enshrining it was preserved by Pherozeshah with loving care. Amidst the triumphs of after years, this little token of goodwill extended to him by the associates of his early life remained a pleasant and ineffaceable memory.

## CHAPTER II

### LIFE IN ENGLAND 1865-1868

TO Pherozeshah the voyage was one long misery. He was a bad sailor, and suffered all the agonies of sea-sickness. He had a thoroughly miserable time, and when the boat touched at Aden, he heaved a sigh of relief. The genius of Lesseps had not yet given the world the Suez Canal, which brought England nearer to India, and at the same time divided the two more completely than ever. The passengers had to cross over by rail from Suez to Cairo, and then on to Alexandria. Sir Alexander Grant and his young charges spent a couple of days at Marseilles, and later on in the gay capital of France, then at the height of her prosperity, and full of the splendour of the Napoleonic régime. After some crowded hours, during which the youthful visitors saw a new world bursting upon their wondering eyes, they crossed the Channel. It was a terrible ordeal for Pherozeshah. The passage was rough, and he suffered so greatly from the effects of sea-sickness that the doctor afterwards said another hour of it might have killed him. But the Fates were kind to him and to India, and once he was on land, he quickly recovered. It was some time before Pherozeshah settled down in his new surroundings. For a short while he stayed with Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, who had gone to England as a partner in a prosperous firm of merchants, and was just embarking on his most remarkable political career. Afterwards, boarding arrangements were made with Professor Key, the Head Master of University College School and a Latin scholar of considerable reputation.

There were not many Indians in London at the time, but they were congenial spirits. Circumstanced as they were, they were thrown much into each other's society. None the less, they moved about largely, and saw a great deal of the world around them. The dress that Pherozeshah and his immediate associates affected, though elegant, was a curious compromise between Western and Eastern

ideas. A friend who saw them sailing down Oxford Street one day found them "very sprucely dressed up in the height of fashion, except that they had put on an oriental sort of head-dress—being dainty little black velvet caps, gay with long flowing blue silk tassels attached to a button fixed in the centre at the top, from which radiated some skeins of silk." The head-gear was intended as a compliment to Dadabhai Naoroji, who exercised a great influence over the minds of the young Indians, and was a guide, philosopher and friend to them. Before he became a member of Parliament, he always went about in London plainly dressed in a long black broad-cloth coat buttoned at the neck, and with his head covered by a black velvet cap with a small blue tassel. Pherozeshah and his companions had at first adopted this costume, but when yielding to the dictates of fashion, they dressed themselves up in the mode of the day, they retained the cap as a compliment to the *guru*. It was a somewhat outlandish combination, but it procured the young dandies a certain amount of attention which was by no means unacceptable.

Whilst in London, Pherozeshah was very friendly with Mr. and Mrs. D. D. Cama, at whose house he was a most welcome guest. Many Parsis in London gravitated to that delightful place in the country on Sundays, where, among other enjoyments, they were treated to a dinner cooked in the Parsi fashion. The typically Indian game of *chaupat* formed the principal amusement at these weekly gatherings. Pherozeshah was an adept at the game, in which the fun is apt to become faster and more furious, the more heavily one bangs the board with the pieces. So great were the excitement and noise round *chaupat* board that Mr. Cama's neighbour one day inquired why it was that he was always engaged on Sundays in hanging pictures! Pherozeshah was the outstanding figure at this and other gatherings. He took the lead in everything that was done, and his company looked to him for direction, as to one who was born to command. He was the *arbiter elegantiarum*, and his right to lay down the law was conceded without question. He was the most agreeable of companions, and his versatile talents, charm of manner and skill at various games assured him a warm welcome everywhere.

Apart from his legal studies, Pherozeshah devoted some time to the study of French, with which he soon picked up, a fair acquaintance. He read a great deal of French Literature of the period of the Revolution, and was a warm admirer of Mirabeau and the other great actors in that earth-shaking drama. He was so fond of the language that on his return to India, when briefs were not too plentiful, he used to give lessons in French to some of his friends. As professional and public engagements began to multiply, he lost familiarity with the language, and during his subsequent visits to Europe never ventured to speak it.

Besides the company that has been mentioned, there were also about this time in London several Indians, who were destined to leave the impress of their personality on the country. They were gifted young men, and they made the most of their opportunities. Jamsetjee Tata, after many vicissitudes of fortune, lived to become a great captain of industry, and the pioneer of India's industrial awakening. Man Mohun Ghosh distinguished himself as a lawyer and politician during the comparatively short span of life that was allotted to him. Budrudin Tyabji enjoyed an immense practice at the Bar, rose to the Bench, and carried with him there the qualities which had given him an honoured place among the leaders of the people. W. C. Bonnerji became a lawyer and a leader of unquestioned eminence, and his massive personality lent distinction to the public life of Bengal. All these young men used to meet at Dadabhai's place, where Pherozeshah came closely in contact with them. This intimate association was of considerable value to him, and laid in the case of Bonnerji, the foundations of a political friendship, which was of the greatest benefit to India in the days when they and other devoted patriots strove to implant in her the seeds of new ideas, and the impulse towards a higher life.

The inner circle of Pherozeshah's friends made good also. Hormasji Wadya prospered in Kathiawar, did useful public service and achieved a Knighthood. C. M. Cursetjee, after a period of service in the mofussil, became a judge of the Presidency Small Causes Court. Limji Banaji rose by slow degrees to the responsible position of prothonotary of the High Court. Jamsetjee Cama, confirmed *bon vivant*, prospered sufficiently as a solicitor to enable him

to indulge his inordinate fondness for the good things of life. None indeed of that promising little group failed to make good.

Though Pherozeshah was thrown largely in the society of his own countrymen, it must not be imagined that he moved in a narrow circle. The Indian student was a bit of a rarity in those days, and was not regarded as a nuisance or an object of suspicion, as he became at a later period. The doors of English society were not closed to him, and he was received with warmth and kindness in many a home. Pherozeshah had thus no difficulty in making friends amongst people of good social standing. Among others, he met the Reverend Long, well-known in connection with the indigo trouble in the 'sixties. Through the kindness of the latter, he had opportunities of meeting Lord Shaftesbury, the Father of factory legislation, the Duke of Argyle, Secretary of State for India, and other notable men.

It was a memorable epoch in the history of England and the world. Carlyle, Ruskin, Mill, Darwin, Herbert Spencer—to mention only a few of the great teachers of the age—delivered their message, and humanity felt profoundly shaken in its beliefs, ideas and dogmas. "Mazzini and Victor Hugo imparted activity, elevation and the generous breadth of cosmopolitan outlook to the most ardent spirits of the new time in our own island." In politics, Liberalism made its appearance as a stimulating and powerful factor in national progress. Cobden and Bright and Gladstone breathed a new spirit into the political controversies of the day. Across the Atlantic, "humanity fought one of its most glorious battles," and the curse of slavery was put an end to. A revolution was sweeping over men's thoughts and ideas, and in the words of Lord Morley, "only those whose minds are numbed by the suspicion that all times are tolerably alike, and men and women much of a muchness, will deny that it was a generation of intrepid effort forward."

It was in such an atmosphere that Pherozeshah imbibed those principles which ever afterwards governed his public career. Contact with all that was healthy in Western life and thought instilled into him a breadth of view, courage, independence of thought and a love of ordered progress, allied with a certain conservatism which lies at the root of the British character. He developed early those traits

which raised him so greatly above his countrymen, and displayed a maturity of thought which impressed all who came in contact with him. He took a keen interest in the problems of the day, particularly as they affected his country, and was one of the most active members of the East India Association, which was founded by Dadabhai Naoroji in October 1866, "for the independent and disinterested advocacy and promotion by all legitimate means of the interest and welfare of India generally." The Association owed its existence to the support of many enlightened Indian princes, which Dadabhai was able to secure for it on his return to India for a brief period after the commercial crash which had involved among others the firm of which he was a partner. The organization, until it was captured by retired Anglo-Indian officials, did yeoman service in stimulating political activity among Indians and educating English opinion about the problems of India. Its annual reports contain a treasure-house of information on a multitude of subjects, and may be read with profit even at the present day.

Before this Association, Pherozeshah read a paper on *The Educational System in the Presidency of Bombay*, which evoked warm praise from a small but appreciative audience. It was characterized as an "able, clever and elaborate paper," and the young lecturer was asked to embody his views in a series of resolutions to be brought up again for discussion.

After defining the true aims of Indian education, Pherozeshah went on to express his conviction that for a long time to come elementary education of the masses must give place to a high liberal education. True, the latter would be confined to a handful of men, but he declared that the history of every great movement in the progress of civilization and of all the reformations and revolutions showed that it is these few men who do the work of the uplifting of the masses, and who, endowed with real earnestness, deep thought and comprehensive insight, create and mould the new ideas, and transfer them thus ready-made to the multitude, to be received by them on their authority and example. To this view he clung with tenacity throughout his long career. Equally strong was his conviction that the vernaculars of the country were unsuited to become the vehicles of a liberal education, and that English ought consequently

to be the principal medium of imparting knowledge. The controversies which centred round such questions in those days cannot be said to have lost their interest even at the present moment. To those seeking illumination on the subject, the lecture with its mass of facts and arguments presents much that may be pondered over with profit.

This was not Pherozeshah's only incursion into the controversies of the day. He took an active and intelligent interest in various public questions, which enabled those who came in contact with him to understand and appreciate his gifted personality. Among those who formed a high opinion of his capacity was Professor Key, who in 1868 wrote to Pherozeshah in terms of generous appreciation such as may well have flattered the latter. "Already entertaining a very high opinion of your race in general," wrote the great Latinist, "I must say without flattery that I found in you something exceeding all my expectations; and I look forward to your playing an important part in India, especially in procuring for the Parsees, and I hope the Hindoos also, as well as others, a status in society more worthy of them. Keep this grand object in view, and do your best to attain eminence at the Bombay Bar, for I feel sure you have qualities, both natural and acquired, that may enable you to do so."

This was on the eve of Pherozeshah's departure from England. He had been called to the Bar in Easter Term in 1868 and had been received at the Benchers' Table. A bill for £1 1s. made out by "John Punt, second butler," for proportionate contribution to the expenses of a wine party affords evidence that the occasion was duly celebrated. As he had completed his training, his father was desirous that he should return at the earliest opportunity, preferably with Sir Alexander, who was coming out in July. The failure of Mr. Rustumji Jamsetjee, shortly after Pherozeshah's departure for England, had deprived the latter of the benefit of the scholarship, and had thrown on the elder Mehta a burden of which he was anxious to be relieved. His son with his extravagant habits had spent quite a small fortune during his three and a half years' stay in England. Pherozeshah delayed his departure, however, as he wanted to give a few finishing touches to his education. Ultimately, with the good wishes of those who were taking a sympathetic interest in his

career, and to the regret of his intimate associates, who felt that life was losing much of its savour by his departure, Pherozeshah sailed for India in September 1868. Those four years which he had spent in England had been among the happiest in his life, and had equipped him with much that went to the making of his remarkable public career.

### CHAPTER III

#### EARLY YEARS AT THE BAR 1868-1876

ON the way out, Pherozeshah made the acquaintance of an Englishman occupying high office in India, Mr. William Wedderburn (as he then was), one of the most earnest and disinterested champions of its interests that this country has ever known. Through the good offices of the latter, the young barrister was on his return made a Justice of the Peace, and thus given an early opportunity of acquainting himself with the municipal affairs of the city, which were then vested in the hands of the Bench of Justices.

On the very afternoon of his arrival, Pherozeshah attended a function which had a peculiar interest for him. It was held at the Framji Co<sup>ws</sup>asji Institute, where a large and distinguished company had gathered under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Couch, Chief Justice of Bombay, to bid farewell to Sir Alexander Grant, who was retiring from the country to take up the appointment of Principal of the Edinburgh University, which some years before, he had sought to obtain, but without success. The latter was glad to get an opportunity of meeting his young friend whom he greeted as one who had come back, "fresh with the legal atmosphere of Lincoln's Inn upon him." The address, which was numerously signed by his friends and pupils, testified to the warm regard and affection in which Grant was held by all classes of people. By his devoted labours in what was almost a virgin field, he had deserved well of the City and the Presidency. The history of education in Western India contains the names of many distinguished men, but none greater than that of the gifted translator of the Ethics of Aristotle, who, in the early sixties, moulded the lives and thoughts of a generation eager to learn and to spread the light of education far and wide in the land.

Pherozeshah lost no time in settling down to the work of his profession. He rented chambers in a somewhat rickety old house in Apollo Street, where the inevitable period of waiting for briefs that

seemed a long time in coming was enlivened by the excellent company that gathered there every afternoon after the day's work was over. In those days, the High Court was located in a building occupied later by the Great Western Hotel. The Appellate Court with its various establishments was at Mazagon. At the head of the Judiciary was Sir Richard Couch, an eminent judge, who was supported by able colleagues, and by a Bar which included that eccentric genius T. C. Anstey.

The little group of briefless juniors, which spent its time mostly in the corridor or the common room, had an uphill task before it. It is true the profession was not over-crowded, and competition in the sense in which it is understood now did not exist. But the entire practice was more or less concentrated in the hands of a few eminent counsel, such as Anstey, Scoble, Green, Latham, White, Mariott, and one or two others. It was a very difficult thing either to dislodge them from their position, or even to carry away a few crumbs from their richly-laden table. Compared with the Bar of the present day, these contemporaries of Pherozeshah might be regarded as veritable giants. The litigant public ran after them, and took no notice of the knot of hapless juniors hungrily looking for briefs. Budrudin Tyabji, son of an enterprising Borah merchant, and the first Indian to join the Bombay Bar, was, perhaps, the earliest to make his way up. He had the backing of his brother Cumrudin, who was the first Indian solicitor. Shantaram Narayen and Nanabhai Haridas also commanded some practice, but it was on the appellate side. There were hardly any firms of Indian attorneys to give the young men a lift in the profession. A deal of patronage rested in the hands of managing clerks, whose smile was to be courted, and some of whom were as important figures as the solicitors whom they served.

The indifference of attorneys and the haughtiness of seniors did not, however, weigh on the spirits of the gay little coterie that daily met in Pherozeshah's chambers. They were spirited young men, full of the *joie de vivre*, and they divided their time between tea parties, political discussions and practical jokes. One of the unwritten rules of the company was that each newcomer on his arrival was to entertain his colleagues to dinner. These functions were usually held

in a private room at Old Pallonji's Adelphi Hotel, situated at Byculla, which was then a fashionable locality. It was the first hotel in Bombay worth the name, and through the personality of its old proprietor, familiar to hosts of Englishmen and Indians in all parts of the Presidency, it had come to be regarded as an institution. The dinners were highly popular and promoted friendly intercourse. One of the newcomers, Homi Bennett, contrived to avoid the function, however. A citation on a printed form obtained from the Sheriff's office, and drawn up in all the ponderous legal phraseology was issued, requiring the culprit to appear "at the bar of the Dinner Tribunal, *coram* Pherozeshah Mehta," to show cause why he should not be put out of caste. A court-peon was got to serve the rule on him, as he sat one afternoon in one of the courts, whilst the "Tribunal" awaited results in the common-room. They had not long to wait. Following on the service of the citation, the newcomer who was of a very irascible temperament, and unable to appreciate a joke, rushed up in a towering rage, made straight for Pherozeshah, caught hold of him, and threatened to throw him out of one of the windows overlooking the old ice-house, one of the landmarks of Bombay that has recently disappeared. Prompt and vigorous intervention prevented a fight, however, and harmony was ultimately restored by the delinquent offering reparation in the shape of a modest lunch washed down with a hock-cup. Those were happy days indeed. In later years men saw much of Pherozeshah at various places, at the Ripon Club, the Presidency Association and the chambers at Esplanade Road which became a regular *salon*. They found him courteous, affable and full of genial humour. But nowhere did he give such play to his fancies and ready wit as he used to do in that choice circle of early friends, full of hopes and ambitions of youth.

With the removal of the Court to the imposing pile of buildings on the Oval, the little group dispersed in various directions. Badrudin Tyabji got lost in the ever-increasing volume of briefs; H. A. Wadya winged his way to Rajkot to earn wealth and fame; Limji Banaji accepted a subordinate position in the High Court; C. M. Cursetjee got absorbed in the mofussil judiciary; Dady Cama returned to London to take charge of his father's business; Bal

Mangesh Wagle went to Baroda as Chief Judge in the wake of Dadabhai Naoroji who was appointed prime minister of the Gaekwad; and poor Bennett developed homicidal mania and committed suicide. One by one they all disappeared, some to meet again under different circumstances, and in different surroundings. As one who cherished vivid recollections of those unforgettable days wrote, "crowds indeed have since come and gone and filled Pherozeshah's chambers, but never did the flavour and fragrance of the familiar intercourse of the old circle of those happy early days return; other times succeeded, and other men and manners."

The time during which Pherozeshah had to cool his heels was not wasted by him. He was very regular in his attendance in the various courts, and assiduous in his study of text-books and reports. He attracted to himself the favourable notice of Justices Westropp and Bailey, the latter of whom was very sympathetic and hospitable to the little contingent of Indian barristers. Off the Court, Pherozeshah amused himself by writing in various journals, including *The Indian Statesman*, a paper founded by that "Bayard of Indian Journalism," Robert Knight. He set himself up occasionally as a dramatic critic, being fond of the theatre, and once invited on himself a very scurrilous attack from one of the outraged dramatists whom he had criticized. With the aid of Dady Patel, a scion of a very respectable family, with whom theatricals were an obsession, he stage-managed several amateur performances got up in aid of local charities.

By slow degrees, work began to flow in the direction of Pherozeshah and his friends. The atmosphere which surrounded the young men began to be less frigid, as gradually Anstey, Mariott, Macpherson, Scoble and others showed themselves friendly to them. The process of climbing up was, nevertheless, somewhat slow, and in the struggle several gave up practice at the Bar, and succumbed to the little temptations that were held out to them. In this way, some of the close and constant companions of Pherozeshah were snapped up, and the Bar knew them no more. From the first, Pherozeshah, confident in his abilities, had determined not to be turned aside by any considerations whatsoever from the pursuit of his profession. As he himself once said at a gathering in his honour, "an eminent member of Government, a most broad-minded man and a man of high

liberal culture," had sent for him very shortly after his return from England, and offered to appoint him as a First Class Sub-Judge. It was a problem for him, for briefs were not too frequently coming in those days, and as his friends reminded him, his income just enabled him to go to a restaurant occasionally. But he declined the offer, and there is no doubt that the chief reason which prompted his action was his desire to preserve his independence, and to keep himself free to serve the public interest, which was always close to his heart.

Pherozeshah's confidence in himself was ultimately justified, for his abilities, powers of exposition, and skill in cross-examination began to compel recognition, and attorneys started taking notice of the promising young counsel. One of the earliest cases which brought him into prominence was the celebrated Parsi Towers of Silence case, which excited public interest for weeks on end. He had the good fortune to be Anstey's junior in that case. That remarkable man, though not very pleased at first with the idea of having an inexperienced Indian briefed with him, soon came to form a high opinion of Pherozeshah, though he could not quite reconcile himself to the latter's massive turban! In Anstey's opinion, publicly expressed, his brilliant junior had "all the germs of future eminence in him."

But it was, after all, mofussil practice that laid the foundations of Pherozeshah's remarkable success at the Bar. From an early period, Gujarat and Kathiawar began to requisition the services of the young lawyer, who had a habit of giving his opponents an uncomfortable time, and who stood no nonsense from even the most arbitrary judge or magistrate. The Surat Riot case, which arose from the introduction of the License Tax in the seventies, securely established the reputation he was making, and placed him at once in the front rank of mofussil practitioners. The ability, resourcefulness, and forensic eloquence which he displayed in the case made his name famous throughout Gujarat, and briefs began to pour in from all quarters. That settled the direction of his professional career, which thereafter lay largely in the mofussil, though, if he had chosen to, he could have commanded an extensive practice in Bombay, where clients were no less eager to engage his services. But with his growing public engagements, it suited him to cultivate

mofussil practice, which was by no means as exacting as work in the High Court, and was equally lucrative.

His professional engagements took him to all parts of the Presidency, and familiarized him with the modes and habits of life and thought of people of all conditions. Facilities for travel and accommodation were very inadequate in those days, when the railway had not penetrated to all parts of the country, and a good deal of roughing had to be done, to which Pherozeshah, who had not developed the extreme fastidiousness of his later years, readily submitted. Among other places, he went sometimes to the Chief Commissioner's Court at Mount Abu. The journey had to be made from Ahmedabad, *via* Deesa, in a *dumni* cart drawn by bullocks. In the hot season, the intense heat of the scorching plains of Rajputana made travelling by day very uncomfortable; so the *dumni* used to roll on all the night, discharging its burden at some indifferent rest-house or dak bungalow, where the day was spent in rest and sleep.

Discomfort and fatigue, however, made no difference to Pherozeshah's habits. He always had his bath in the morning and scrupulously performed his toilet, which was a somewhat elaborate affair even in those days. It gave him a good appetite for breakfast, which he enjoyed despite the heat and tedium of the journey. The only thing he disliked was physical exertion, which after his college days, he carefully avoided. On one occasion, as he was approaching Deesa in company with his friend, "C. M. C.", who was holding a junior brief, news arrived that the clients had sent for "Pherozeshah Saheb" a couple of riding-camels to take the party into the town, some twelve miles distant. The announcement left the latter unmoved, and he turned to sleep again. His companion was out in a twinkle, and galloped into Deesa three hours before the leisurely *dumni* made its way into the town. Those were unforgettable days, when Pherozeshah laid the foundations of a vast practice, and when his journeys to various parts of the Presidency had not yet assumed the character of travels in state at the expense of clients only too anxious to have the great man on his own terms.

The atmosphere in which Pherozeshah moved was stimulating in many ways; and gave tone to his character and mental attitude. The

Bar in his time was energetic, and jealous of its rights and privileges. In 1871, when the Indian Evidence Act was on the anvil, it sent up a strong protest to the then Viceroy, the Earl of Mayo, against some of the provisions of the Bill, which by implication cast a reflection on the integrity and independence of the legal profession in India. The distinguished jurist who drafted the Act, Sir James FitzJames Stephen, though he complained of the uncompromising vigour of the strictures of the Bombay Bar, thought it prudent, however, to drop the objectionable clauses. It may be mentioned in passing that, during the discussions on the Bill, Sir George Campbell, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, distinguished himself by suggesting that "if they could not altogether abolish the lawyers, there should be a section to the effect that no lawyer should open his mouth with respect to the question of the admissibility or inadmissibility of evidence!" Evidently, the bureaucrat's dislike of lawyers is not the creation of recent times, nor the result of the latter's virtual monopoly of political power.

On another occasion, the Indian section of the Bar made a spirited protest against its exclusion from an entertainment which was proposed to be given to Sir Joseph Arnold, the eminent judge and scholar, who was retiring from the Bench. The English members of the profession had decided to give a Bar dinner at the Byculla Club. Pherozeshah and his friends stoutly protested against this procedure. They pointed out with much justice that no demonstration could properly be said to be made by an entire profession unless all the members were free to participate in it, and they further resented the introduction of an invidious racial distinction, which would not have very happy consequences in the future. The proper course was either to select some place other than the sacred precincts of the Byculla Club, or to confine the entertainment to friends and admirers. The Advocate-General to whom this protest was addressed took refuge in some technicality, and the representation failed to affect the matter at issue.

A little later, the racial question cropped up in another form, and this time Pherozeshah's connection with it was much more personal and intimate. He came forward to voice the grievances of the Indian Bar with regard to the distribution of the many posts and offices

which were subject to the patronage of the Chief Justice. In a letter over the initials P. M. which he wrote on 9 May 1873, to *The Indian Statesman*, Pherozeshah pointed out that for 25 English counsel who were drawing in the aggregate £25,000 a year, there were 14 Indian barristers getting between them less than a tenth of that amount. To this a brother member of the Bar, Mr. Constable, gave a reply, in which he attempted to show that Pherozeshah's figures were misleading, and that there was a large number of appointments held by Indians, who had no reason to complain of the manner in which the patronage had been exercised. Pherozeshah, of course, was not to be silenced, and the rejoinder which he gave pointed out that "it was in distributing the good loaves that the natives were passed over," an argument which had a wider application than the matter at issue involved. The result of this spirited little encounter was that Pherozeshah was called upon for an explanation by the Bar Association, his criticisms being considered a breach of professional etiquette. On the advice of Anstey, he refused to recognize its jurisdiction and to tender any explanation, taking his stand upon the privileges of journalism. How this interesting episode terminated may not be related, as the minutes of the meetings of the Bar Association are strictly private, and no curious eyes may pry into their secrets. It was his first encounter with constituted authority, and while he did not exactly come off with flying colours, he emerged from the fight without a scratch.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP 1869-1870

THOUGH his circumstances and habits of life made it necessary for Pherozeshah to build up a substantial income, from his youth he had determined to devote himself to public affairs. It was not long after his return from England that he was admitted to the ranks of those who were striving to infuse political activity into a city more or less absorbed in the pursuit of commerce and industry. At a public meeting held in Bombay under the chairmanship of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, second Baronet of that name, the Bombay Branch of the East India Association was launched into existence amidst considerable enthusiasm. The Bombay Association, which had as its secretary that rugged and sternly independent publicist, Naoroji Furdunji, who was known as "the tribune of the people," had done useful work in championing Indian interests, but had ceased for some time to be an active political force. The new organization had somewhat different objects in view. In the words of its founder, Dadabhai Naoroji, it was to act simply as a messenger and an agent of the parent institution. In after years, when the latter ceased to represent the ideas and ambitions of its early founders, the possession of the funds of the Bombay Branch became the subject of a bitter controversy, which arose out of the character of agency stamped upon it on its foundation.

Pherozeshah and Bal Mangesh Wagle were appointed the first secretaries of the new Association. In moving their appointment, one of the speakers referred to them as young lawyers and distinguished graduates of the University, and hoped that "they would not allow their youthful enthusiasm to cool down when briefs began to accumulate upon their hands." The suggestion underlying this remark was not unnatural. Too often have the prizes of a professional career succeeded in withdrawing some of our best intellects from the arena of public life. But little did the speaker realize that

in one at least of the youthful secretaries, there dwelt a public spirit which was no less remarkable than the talents which he so freely devoted to the service of his country.

The first public activity of the new recruit to the ranks of political workers was in the direction of organizing a testimonial to Dadabhai Naoroji in recognition of the eminent services he was rendering to India. The Grand Old Man was then in the early stages of a career, whose inspiration was to touch an ever widening circle and to witness at its culmination the triumph of the principles which were the mainsprings of its activities for more than half a century. The people of India already recognized in him an unflinching champion of their interests, and the testimonial got up by the citizens of Bombay was but one of the many proofs of their confidence and regard. To the pleasant task of making it worthy of the recipient, Pherozeshah applied himself with energy, and his labours and those of others, backed by an enthusiastic public, resulted in the collection of a handsome amount, which was presented as a purse to Dadabhai in July 1869, at a meeting largely attended by all classes and communities, and which might be regarded as the first representative gathering of the citizens of Bombay. It was entirely characteristic of the man that, poor as he was, he devoted later on the whole of that sum to the furtherance of the causes which were so dear to his heart.

In December 1869, Pherozeshah delivered a lecture before the Bombay Branch of the East India Association on the Grant-in-Aid system in Bombay. In his paper before the parent body in London, he had taken a general survey of the position of education as it stood at the time. He had dealt briefly with the Grant-in-Aid system and condemned it. The present lecture was devoted to a more exhaustive treatment of the subject, and was directed towards showing that the policy of the Government had been largely responsible for the slow progress which education had made in India. After pointing out that whatever success the Grant-in-Aid system had achieved in England was due to the widespread perception of the general and special advantages of education, the existence of a richly-endowed set of colleges and grammar schools and the necessity for the recognition of a denominational system of education, the

lecturer proceeded to show that these conditions did not exist in India. He was of opinion that the framers of the famous Despatch of 1854 had set too great a store by the growing appetite which the richer classes were supposed to feel for the acquisition of knowledge. Such, however, was not the case. Nor were the Directors right in thinking that the system was likely to foster a spirit of self-reliance which was of great importance for the well-being of a nation. In Pherozeshah's opinion, nothing was more calculated "to induce the instinct of self-government than a thorough liberal education of a high order," and it was better at once to establish a full-blown educational system which would give an impetus to the movement towards self-government, than to adopt a system which would achieve that end by a slow and laborious process. As to the ways and means, the lecturer suggested :

In the first place, the State should establish such a frame-work of a complete co-ordinated system of primary schools, secondary schools, or, as we call them High schools, Normal schools, general and technical colleges and universities, as, without being too elaborate, might be capable of expansion and development with the progress of the times; and secondly, that whenever an educational institution, say a High school, could be established in a certain locality, the Government should set about directly to supply the want with private, local and other aid if it was forthcoming, without waiting for it if it was not, and further that it should do so in a thoroughly efficient manner, without leaving it unprovided in any essential particular.

The lecture then dealt with the question of expenditure, and concluded with a brief survey of what European countries had done in the cause of education. The discussion that followed was interesting. Ranade took exception to the strictures which had been passed on the Board of Directors, who, in his opinion, had certainly not erred in their magnificent conception of a national scheme of education, suited to the circumstances of India at the time, and towards whom it behoved them all to assume a most respectful tone. As for the Grant-in-Aid system, it had worked very well, and

in any case it was too early to sit in judgment upon it. It was obvious that Government with the assistance of private liberality or enterprise must accomplish greater results than a pure Government agency could hope to achieve. Bal Mangesh Wagle defended Pherozeshah against these criticisms, and in support of the view advanced in the lecture that the richer classes had not yet begun to appreciate the advantages of education, gave the instance of a boy who wanted from him a certificate of poverty to enable him to be admitted as a free student in the Elphinstone College, and on whose marriage only a month before Rs. 5,000 had been spent by his parents! Wedderburn, who was present, stated that whatever might be thought of the question of higher education being subsidized, there was no doubt it was the duty of the State to provide primary education for the masses, and the system at work appeared to be well adapted to secure the end in view. The general opinion as expressed at the meeting seemed to be that the Grant-in-Aid system had not worked badly.

In the light of the progress made during the last 50 years, we are in a position to estimate how far Pherozeshah's criticisms were justified by the event. That the policy of the Government in the matter of education has not been marked by imagination or statesmanship will be conceded by most people. At the farewell gathering already referred to, on the eve of Sir Alexander Grant's retirement from the country, he spoke with bitterness of the one per cent devoted to the cause of education, science and art, and observed with much force "when we consider the 40 per cent devoted to the military department we must, I think, consider that it is somewhat surprising that people should be heard boasting that it is the pride and duty and mission of England to educate the people of India, when such a wretched pittance as this is all that is given for the advancement and spread of education." The Despatch of 1854 had breathed a spirit of genuine liberality, and had grandly conceived the scope and purpose of education for the people of India. Normally developed, the policy outlined by the Despatch would have borne results worthy of its framers. But the Mutiny of 1857 rudely upset the balance of mind of many Englishmen, and induced a different outlook altogether. That high-minded Englishman, Allan

Octavian Hume, who later became the Father of the Congress, complained at the time that "many entirely disapprove of any efforts to cultivate the native mind, many condemn as unconditionally a merely secular education." Sixty years have since rolled by, and yet who can say that the old prejudices against education have died away? There are signs, however, that more enlightened views on the subject are beginning to prevail, and the responsibility of the State on which Pherozeshah laid such emphasis, is coming to be more widely recognized.

About this time, public attention was focussed on a controversy which has dragged on for more than half a century. The question of the larger admission of Indians into the ranks of the Covenanted Service has occupied the foremost place among the political problems of this country. The Act of 1833 laid down in emphatic terms the principle of equality, and declared that "no native of the said territories, nor any natural-born subject of His Majesty resident therein, shall, by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office or employment under the said Company." The question was earnestly considered at the time of this declaration, and sympathy towards the legitimate ambitions and aspirations of Indians was expressed by Sir Robert Peel, Lord Lansdowne and other British statesmen. The subject was again to the fore in 1853, and among the measures suggested for introducing a larger Indian element in the administration was a proposal for holding simultaneous examinations in England and in India. A departmental committee of the India Office accordingly went into the question in 1860, and declared that it was not only just but expedient that the natives of India should be employed in the administration of India to as large an extent as possible, consistently with the maintenance of British supremacy. After observing that no positive disqualification of Indians existed even at that time, the Committee went on to say:

Practically however they are excluded. The law declares them eligible, but the difficulties opposed to a native living in India and residing in England for a time are so great that, as a general rule, it is almost impossible for a native successfully to compete at the

periodical examinations held in England. Were this inequality removed, we should no longer be exposed to the charge of making promise to the ear, and breaking it to the heart.

After discussing the schemes that had been proposed to remedy the existing inequality, the Committee unhesitatingly declared itself in favour of simultaneous examinations "as being the fairest and most in accordance with the principles of a general competition for a common object." Such was the considered opinion of a body whose competence or impartiality could not be challenged. Needless to say, however, nothing was done, and the question after being continuously agitated for over half a century has now ceased to possess any interest whatever for the people of this country. In the sixties, however, hopes ran high, and the energy and enthusiasm of Dadabhai Naoroji, and the youthful band which followed his lead, kept the question prominently before the public. In August, 1867, Dadabhai read a paper before the East India Association advocating that competitive examinations should take place in India for a portion of the appointments to the Civil Service. An interesting discussion ensued, and it was resolved to submit a memorial to the Secretary of State for India. A deputation from the Association accordingly waited upon Sir Stafford Northcote, who expressed himself favourably with regard to the changes proposed, and stated that he was in correspondence with Sir John Lawrence and others in India on the subject. A year later, Dadabhai read another paper before the Association, dealing, with the thoroughness characteristic of him, with all the objections urged against the suggestions contained in the memorial. The immediate object of the paper was to support the following motion of Fawcett in the House of Commons:

That this House whilst cordially approving of the system of open competition for appointments in the East India Civil Service, is of opinion that the people of India have not a fair chance of competing for these appointments as long as the examinations are held nowhere but in London; this House would therefore deem it desirable that simultaneously with the examination in

London, the same examination should be held in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

The end of it all was the introduction by Sir Stafford Northcote of the East India Bill, clause 6 of which empowered the authorities in India to appoint Indians to any office, place or employment, even though they had not been admitted to the Civil Service of Her Majesty in India. In other words, instead of the principle of competition upon equal terms which was demanded, a principle of selection was introduced, which could not but be arbitrary in its working, let alone its other objectionable features.

The Bill had a somewhat mixed reception. Some people were disappointed that the scheme of simultaneous examinations had found no place in it, while others were willing to recognize the good intentions of the Secretary of State and discover in the Bill the first measure of fulfilment of the legitimate aspirations of Indians to share in the governance of their country. Among the latter was Dadabhai, who, in a paper, forwarded from Bombay, where he then was, to the East India Association, took up an attitude of hopefulness and a desire to give the scheme a trial. This optimism, it is interesting to note, does not appear to have been shared by some of his young disciples, for in 1870 we find Pherozeshah vigorously attacking the proposals outlined in the Bill. In a paper read before the Bombay Branch on the 27th April, he entered upon a spirited defence of the competitive system, winding up his argument with a long quotation from Macaulay, who at the close of a striking passage in one of his speeches in the House of Commons on the occasion of the passing of the Act of 1853—when the Civil Service was first thrown open to competition—had laid down the general conclusion that those men who distinguished themselves most in academical competition when they were young, were the men who in after years distinguished themselves most in the competition of life.

Pherozeshah regarded the competitive system as infinitely superior as a test of qualification to appointment by selection, which he condemned as opening the door to jobbery of the worst character, and as being unjust and demoralising to the Indians whom it was

intended to benefit. He could not understand how anyone could fail to perceive the relative value of the two systems, and he felt that there was some silent reason operating on the minds of the framers of the measure. He could not help thinking that they must have been led away by the specious argument that intellectual cultivation did not induce moral cultivation. This belief has been general, and has found expression in a variety of ways and been largely exploited for political ends; and those who have followed the educational policy of the last few years cannot fail to have been struck by the retrograde tendency which has manifested itself in several directions. At the beginning, however, the question was free from the political taint which has so largely dominated the consideration of it at the present day. A striking passage in Pherozeshah's paper, which will bear extensive quotation, deals with these insidious attacks on "literary" education, which have become such a fashion in recent years:

If we took those periods in the development of a society when morality did not exist separately, but was still absorbed in religion, it would be perfectly true to say that intellectual culture did not teach morality. Thus, during the early ages of Christianity what intellectual training there was would have been utterly insufficient to form the morals of its pupils. In those days nothing could have performed that task so well and so thoroughly as a religious education. History abounds with instances of such periods. There was a time when Judaism possessed its sole and best culture in the Mosaic books. There was a time when Hellenism had to look only to the theological poems of such men as Homer and Hesiod; there was a time when Mohamedanism depended for its civilization on the Koran alone. The next stage, however, of the progress of these societies, if they succeed in advancing to it, is one in which morality emancipates itself from religious shackles and appears under other shapes and other forms. Such has been the case with English in common with all Western civilization. The Apostles and the Fathers are now superseded by Poets and Historians and Philosophers. Not that these people have taken to preaching and inculcating directly and

indirectly the moral precepts once contained in the Bible and its ~~Commentaries~~. The transformation takes place in a less demonstrative manner. The religious teaching slowly distributes itself in the shape of moral axioms and ideas, which in their transition from posterity to posterity, instil themselves into the mind as its first principles. These first principles mould in after life all your thoughts, your actions and your utterances. The Poet, the Historian, the Philosopher cannot sing or write but on the condition of remaining true to this heritage which they receive. And once you have a complete literature so thoroughly and unconsciously imbued with the highest moral teaching of the day, then religion has done its peculiar work, and intellectual education coincides with moral cultivation.

At the close of the lecture several resolutions were passed which condemned the Bill as likely to lead to the perpetration of political jobbery, and not calculated to open the doors of the Civil Service to Indians in the most honourable manner, in the words of Macaulay, "by conquest, as a matter of right, and not as a mere eleemosynary donation." The meeting was further of opinion that "the natives of India while protesting against exceptional obstructions which are not shared generally, are, however, ambitious of obtaining admission to the Civil Service of their country in a fair fight and open competition."

Despite all this agitation, the Bill became law as it stood. It may be stated here that little was done under the Act till 1879, when rules were framed by which one-sixth of the posts reserved for the Covenanted Service were to be ultimately set apart for Indians; and for gradually carrying out this intention, the number of posts thrown open for competition in England in 1880 was reduced accordingly. It will be seen at once how inadequately this scheme fulfilled the hopes and aspirations which had been aroused. In 1870, when the Act was passed, there were only nine Indians holding the higher appointments. Within the next 20 years, but sixty more Indians were able to get themselves appointed "Statutory Civilians" under the rules. Such was the measure of fulfilment of the promises held out at the time. Even Lord Lytton had to admit, in a secret

report to the authorities in England, that the people of the country had been "cheated" of their hopes.

The Statutory Civilians had a somewhat short and ignoble career. Their recruitment justified in the main the criticisms of those who had condemned the system, and an outcry was raised for its abandonment. A Commission was appointed in 1886, "to devise a scheme which might reasonably be hoped to possess the necessary elements of finality, and to do full justice to the claims of natives of India to higher employment in the public service." But of that hereafter.

## CHAPTER V

### MUNICIPAL REFORM AGITATION 1870-1871

THE period with which we are dealing was noteworthy for a great struggle for the establishment of local self-government in Bombay on sound and progressive lines. It may be instructive to recall the various stages through which municipal government in the city had to pass before it achieved its present position.

Before the memorable régime of Mr. Arthur Crawford, when the administration was in the hands of a board of three commissioners, the city was in a most insanitary condition. Various experiments in municipal government had been tried, but none of them had succeeded in ridding Bombay of her filth and dirt and general insanitation. There was a more or less complete absence of even the ordinary comforts of town life, let alone its amenities. There were no roads to speak of; only narrow and tortuous lanes and streets. Such markets and slaughter-houses as were to be found were centres for disseminating infection and disease. As regards the conservancy system, the scavenger was master of the situation, and was in a position to impose his own terms. Scarcity of water and outbreaks of epidemics like cholera and small-pox were more or less normal features of the city's life in those days.

It was under such conditions that the Act of 1865 came into being. It did away with the absurd system of administration by three commissioners, which had proved so disastrous, and vested the sole executive power in the hands of a single official, responsible to the Bench of Justices. A Controller of Municipal Accounts was appointed to prevent abuse of authority by the Commissioner. The Justices of the Peace of the Town and Island of Bombay were constituted a body corporate with a common seal, for there was no other representative body of men to whom municipal government could be entrusted. The Act came into existence on a day which is known in the annals of the city as the Black Day. It was on the

1st July 1865, that the huge fabric of speculation, which the prosperity following in the wake of the American Civil War had reared up, came tumbling down, involving banks, commercial houses, company promoters, stock-jobbers and merchant princes in one vast ruin. It was indeed a day of tribulation and tears on which Bombay received her charter of municipal government.

The new régime was heir to a heavily burdened state. Nevertheless, a vast programme of improvements was undertaken by the Commissioner, Mr. Arthur Crawford, supported by his energetic assistant, Dr. Hewlett, the Health Officer. The years that followed witnessed strenuous activity in every direction. From being "one foul cesspool and sewers discharging on the sand," the City was made clean and healthy. The scavenger's tyranny was overthrown, and a sound conservancy system was established. Broad roads and foot-paths and adequate lighting arrangements were provided, and the citizens were no longer obliged to stumble in the dark along narrow and uneven lanes and thoroughfares. A satisfactory system of water supply was introduced, a market which was the envy of other towns was built, and open spaces were created in various centres. The old ramparts which surrounded the Fort had already been pulled down, a large area on the western foreshore had been reclaimed, and various other improvements had been effected under the inspiration of Sir Bartle Frere, the then Governor of Bombay, who saw in the Gateway of the East possibilities of development into one of the finest cities in the world. Mr. Crawford's vision was no less broad, and he laboured strenuously to bring Bombay in a line with the most progressive towns in the West. What he accomplished is writ large in her history. His ways were autocratic, however, and his disregard of the financial aspect of his policy was truly sublime. He brushed aside all constitutional checks, and both the Justices and the Controller of Accounts found themselves helpless before his masterful personality.

So long as things went well, this one-man-rule appeared to be free from objection, though not infrequently, lively encounters took place between the Commissioner and his critics on the Bench of Justices. But the Municipality was soon on the verge of bankruptcy, and all the pent-up forces of discontent which had lain under the surface for several years burst out, and a loud outcry was raised

for doing away with the obnoxious Commissioner and the Act which was supposed to be responsible for his autocracy. Public indignation was roused specially by the manner in which the taxes were collected. In the picturesque language of one of the stalwarts of that period, "the vocabulary of denunciation had been exhausted in characterising the present method of obtaining the Municipal income as one of the most iniquitous things the sun looks down upon, either in torrid or temperate zones."

Various committees were appointed from time to time to consider this state of things, but this method of putting off the evil day, which seems to have been in fashion just as much in those unregenerate days as in our own breathless times, did not prove very satisfactory. Ultimately, the Justices were constrained to ask Government to appoint a commission to inquire into and report upon the administration of the Municipality and the changes which were necessary in its constitution. To this the Government replied by inquiring—and not without reason—whether the Justices themselves could not, under the powers which they already possessed, secure a more complete control than they had hitherto exercised over the masterful Commissioner. This somewhat tactless reply did not improve matters very much, and only resulted in further committees being appointed and a few more irregularities being brought to light. At length, an exasperated public decided to take matters into its own hands, and a Ratepayers' Association came into existence in November 1870. It lost no time in sending up a monster petition to the Bench of Justices, detailing the grievances of the public and asking for redress. The Bench pleaded helplessness, and the memorialists were consequently obliged to approach Government directly.

In the meantime, however, the more active spirits on the Bench decided to bring the issue to a head, and Mr. James Forbes, one of the leading merchants of the day, placing himself at the head of what may be called the Opposition, gave a notice of motion to have the constitution of the Municipality altered, so as to secure more effective control of the executive, and greater efficiency and economy of administration. A special meeting of the Justices was called on the 30th June 1871, in the Durbar room of the Town Hall to discuss the proposition. It was a memorable meeting in more ways

than one. Unparalleled scenes of enthusiasm marked the occasion, and a procession with bands playing marched past the Town Hall to stimulate the zeal of the reformers. All Bombay and his wife seemed to be present to watch the great struggle between the reformers and the champions of the Crawford régime.

The meeting was announced for three o'clock, but long before and long after that hour, Church Gate Street and Elphinstone Circle were crowded with vehicles of every description, all trending their way to the rendezvous at the Town Hall. The large room in which the meeting was held was, as a matter of course, very soon filled to overflowing, but still fresh crowds kept surging up to the doors—only to be informed by the constables that there was not space for one more. The “oldest inhabitant” pronounced solemnly that there had never been such a meeting in his recollection.... Round a large table in the centre of the Hall, sat their worshippers on half a dozen rows of chairs, and the rest of the available space was packed with a dense mass of European and Native gentlemen in every variety of costume.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps no other problem in the civic and political life of Bombay has brought together on one platform such a galaxy of talent as was in evidence on that memorable day in June. There were gathered at the meeting men distinguished in every walk of life, keen to serve the interests of the city they loved. Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Naoroji Furdunji, Sorabji Bengalee, Vishvanath Mandlik, Budrudin Tyabji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Dosabhoi Framji, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Narayan Wassudeo—such were among the representatives of the Indian community. The British element was represented by such notable men as Robert Knight, James Maclean, Martin Wood, James Forbes, Hamilton Maxwell, Captain Hancock, Captain Henry, John Connon and Thomas Blaney. These were the makers of the new Bombay, the foundations of which had been laid during the epoch-making administration of Sir Bartle Frere. They were gathered that evening to fight the battle of municipal reform,

<sup>1</sup> *The Times of India*, 6 July 1871.

and to lay broad and deep the foundations of local self-government in the city.

The debate was worthy of the occasion, and lasted through four sittings. An enthusiastic public applauded every telling hit, and spurred its champions to do their best. It is not necessary to enter into a discussion of the proposition moved by Mr. Forbes, and the several amendments thereto, which were proposed by both the apologists and the opponents of the redoubtable Commissioner, who gave and received many hard knocks in the course of the debate. The main feature of most of these proposals was the abolition of the commissionership, and the substitution in its place of an executive Town Council assisted by a Secretary. Considering the experience and capacity of the leaders in the movement, one cannot help a feeling of astonishment at the utter fatuity of this remedy for municipal mismanagement, for it was a revival in another form of the joint control, which had proved such a disastrous failure in the case of the Board of Conservancy and its successor, the triumvirate of municipal commissioners, who were in existence prior to 1865. There were, indeed, some members of the Bench who realized this, and were for retaining executive government in one single officer, but the proposals they put forward lacked the broad outlook and grasp of essentials, without which all reform was mere tinkering with the problem.

It was given to one man alone out of that large and representative body to lay his finger with unerring instinct on the weak spot in the municipal administration, and boldly to point out the right remedy. It was Pherozeshah who stood up in his place towards the end of that long and historic debate, and confidently told the Justices how they had all failed to grasp the real point at issue, and had been led away into reviving discredited schemes in a desperate endeavour to get out of their existing difficulties. The proposals he put forward, and which were ultimately embodied in the Act of 1872, reveal a political sagacity and breadth of outlook, which for a young man of twenty-six may well be considered astonishing, particularly when we remember that he was propounding principles which were but dimly realized even by the ablest among his colleagues. But it was a distinguishing characteristic of Pherozeshah even at that early age

that he could see further than any of his contemporaries, and possessed a shrewdness of judgment which was truly remarkable. His receptive mind had imbibed, besides, in the free atmosphere of England, ideas and principles of government which the writings of political philosophers like Mill had made current coin. He had also studied the working of self-governing institutions in the very home of political and civic freedom.

It was, therefore, with much confidence that Pherozeshah placed before his older and more experienced colleagues on the Bench of Justices his views on the question of municipal reform. After pointing out how the proposals of Messrs. Forbes and Naoroji Furdunji regarding an executive Town Council were radically unsound, he proceeded to show how even those amendments which recognised this had failed to touch the real cause of the break-down of the system. In Pherozeshah's opinion, it was not the Act of 1865 that was at fault so much as the constitution of the body which was charged with the administration of municipal affairs. "There never will be," he observed, "efficient municipal administration in Bombay, till there is a popular and responsible Bench of Justices elected at regular intervals by the ratepayers themselves, a consultative Town Council elected out of it, with a responsible executive officer at its head, appointed by Government, and a Controller of Accounts appointed by the Bench to control the Commissioner." The speaker was aware that most people scouted the idea as absurd and visionary, and one, which in any case, would never be entertained by Government. As to the last objection, he ventured to say that the time was past when strong popular opinion on any subject could be successfully resisted by Government for any length of time. And as for the feasibility of the proposal to set up an elective body, he contented himself with a quotation from a notable speech made by Mr. Anstey at a gathering of the East India Association, in which that versatile and erratic genius had pointed out that local self-government in the widest acceptation of the term was as old as the East itself. Pherozeshah wound up by declaring that only in such a bold and decisive measure as he had outlined, were to be found real salvation and efficiency, and that for that reason, he was unable to agree with any of the palliatives proposed by Mr. Forbes and other

members of the Bench. The speech, able and impressive as it was, met with a somewhat cold reception; for people were in no mood then to listen to original suggestions. They were all out to denounce the Commissioner, and the Act which was supposed to be responsible for his financial vagaries.

This memorable debate on municipal reform came to an end on the fourth day amidst scenes of enthusiasm. The net result of the half a dozen resolutions moved during the discussion and the twenty-six speeches which were delivered, was a representation to Government to appoint a commission of inquiry, and to take the necessary action in the light of the various reports which had been made from time to time, and the resolutions which had been passed at the meeting. Government, thereupon, appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Theodore Hope to inquire into the financial position of the Municipality. The report of the committee revealed grave irregularities, which led to a recurrence of the agitation. Again Mr. Forbes took the lead, and addressed a representation to Government asking them to relieve the municipality of its embarrassments, and to set up a system of administration on sounder and more progressive lines.

It was about this time, when the agitation was at its highest, and was being conducted on both sides with extreme rancour and violence, that Pherozeshah decided to place his views on municipal government once more before the public. He regarded the question as one of general interest, and was anxious it should be discussed by a wider public than that before which he had laid his proposals on the first occasion. A meeting of the Bombay Branch of the East India Association was arranged, and on the 29th November 1871, Pherozeshah read his paper on the "Municipal Reform Question" at the Framji Cowasji Institute before a large audience. The chair was taken by Mr. Dosabhoy Framji, who, in his opening remarks, observed that he had no doubt it would be a pleasant evening, and that the lessons they might learn would be useful and instructive. How very pleasant the evening was going to be, the chairman was soon to realize.

The paper was an elaborate and detailed exposition of the views Pherozeshah had already propounded at the Town Hall meeting.

After pointing out that Mr. Forbes and his supporters had allowed their zeal to overrun their discretion, with the confidence of youth he preached to his audience a homily on the duty of those who would aspire to lead their fellow-men. Said he :

The self-constituted leaders of popular movements have a two-fold duty to perform. It is not sufficient for them to stand forth boldly to give loud utterance to the confused and incoherent popular cries. It is not sufficient for them to reiterate and proclaim the popular indiscriminate wailings and inconclusive analyses of the public grievances. There is another and a higher duty cast upon them, the duty of guiding and rolling the movement in its proper path, of extricating it from the confusion of words and thoughts under which it usually labours, of analysing the genuine and substantial causes of it, of discussing and proposing measures well adapted to meet the end in view.

In this age of cant and cheap notoriety, when political reputations often depend on the persistence and vehemence with which the catch-phrases and the popular cries of the moment are reiterated, how many of our national leaders, one wonders, would be able to-day to stand up to this somewhat exacting test of true leadership. But to return to the subject. After criticizing the attitude of the leaders of the reform movement, Pherozeshah entered upon a vigorous defence of Mr. Crawford, and showed what vast improvements had been effected during his strenuous régime. He pictured to his audience the woeful condition of Bombay as the Commissioner had found her in 1865. It was not a time for patient deliberation, but for prompt and vigorous action, for, "there is a crisis in human affairs when ordinary means avail not, when men must consent to strong measures on the sole condition that they are efficient, when they must give up their freedom and lay aside their most cherished institutions, their most valued forms and guarantees of order and economy, and submit to the strong rule and the strong hand, absolute and arbitrary, on the sole condition that it fails not. Such crises are common in the history of the growth of minor institutions as of great states and commonwealths."

The hour had found the man, and Pherozeshah thought it was highly unjust that the great work done by Mr. Crawford for the City should be allowed to be altogether obscured by the financial irregularities of which he was undoubtedly guilty. It was also a muddled view of the situation to saddle the Act with the sole responsibility for the unfortunate position of affairs in which the Municipality had found itself placed. If passion and prejudice had not perverted the public mind, he continued, it would have been realized that the fault lay in nothing so much as in the constitution of the body charged with the function of enforcing the provisions of the Act. Elected by Government for life, the Bench of Justices was by the very conditions of its existence, organized only for inefficiency and incompetency. It was not their fault, for, as John Bright once said of the Board of Directors of the East India Company, the Justices would be expected to act just about as well as any other equal number of persons elected by the same process, standing under the same circumstances, and surrounded by the same difficulties.

The real remedy, Pherozeshah went on to point out, lay in the introduction of the free representative principle in the constitution of the municipal body. A careful study of Indian history showed conclusively that there was no racial or radical incapacity on the part of Indians for enjoying representative institutions. Village communities existed in India from very ancient times, and within their own sphere they used to exercise wide powers. There was ample testimony to the competence with which they discharged their functions. It was, therefore, absurd to suggest that representative institutions were altogether foreign to the genius of the people of India. Equally fallacious and contrary to the teachings of History, was it to say that they were out of place in a system of government which was paternal in character. From these and other considerations, it was obvious that a measure of local self-government could safely be established, particularly in Bombay, where her citizens had given ample proof of their capacity and public spirit. Unless such a constitutional reform was brought about, it would be idle to expect any improvement in civic affairs. The changes proposed by Mr. Forbes and others were against all principle and experience, and

were a revival in another form of experiments which had failed disastrously in the past.

The views expounded by Pherozeshah in this paper may be read with profit today, not only for their lucid and vigorous exposition of first principles, but also as illustrating the maturity of thought and political sagacity which characterized the man even at that early age. The audience, however, was in no mood to appreciate the point of view of the lecturer, or the ability with which he had marshalled his facts and arguments. Blinded by passion and prejudice, it strongly resented his daring attempt to place the administration of Mr. Crawford in a proper perspective. It did not want any defence of the obnoxious Commissioner, and it conveyed its displeasure at the attempt in a forcible manner. Great disorder prevailed during the continuance of the lecture, and uproarious scenes marked its conclusion. As the following account will show, the proceedings were of a very lively character, and terminated amidst scenes of wild confusion :

Mr. Pherozeshah then ascended the platform and began his paper. His introductory remarks elicited a few 'hear, hears' which stood out in bold relief against one or two vigorous hisses which seemed thrown in by some persons of taste, in order that the value of the slight applause should be increased rather than drowned, and the sounds rendered more sweet by the additional charm of contrast. The lecturer however continued, though the short, sharp staccatoed hiss which marked every full stop, and which ultimately warned us of where the very commas occurred, was still sent forth with exemplary vigour and enthusiasm. Scarcely, however, had each of these gentle reminders of disapproval been uttered, then it had to do battle with an ocean of other cries of 'shame, share, insulting,' mostly disputing its authority, and amongst which it soon expired. At length the paper was finished, when the dissatisfaction which was felt by many members became evident, whilst others, desirous of carrying on matters peaceably, cried 'order, order, chair, chair,' but to no purpose. The steam had been raised to too high a pressure, and it was absolutely necessary to blow off a quantity, and in this operation all sense of order and regulation seemed to be lost sight of. Mr. Sorabji Rustomji

Bunsha rose and attempted to say a few words. The chairman rose, and he also attempted to say a few words, and it was too evident that others were longing to follow his example. The chairman, finding a great obstacle in the way of his addressing the meeting in the person of Mr. Sorabji, who was carrying on matters very enthusiastically in another quarter, requested that gentleman to be seated—an argument, the force of which however that gentleman seemed unable to see—but as he faced the chairman evidently desiring to be convinced on the subject before he could give place to another, Mr. Dosabhoy took the opportunity of the momentary pause of proposing an adjournment. 'Adjournment, adjournment,' responded those on the chairman's left. 'Hear him, hear him,' answered those on the right. Again the chairman attempted to make himself heard, but as by this time Mr. Sorabji was well launched, and in full swing, the expressions of indignation which escaped him were rendered no more intelligible. Each moment the confusion increased, till the whole meeting rose, as if by one accord, and each person began to raise his voice in defence of the party they considered in the right. Even in this, one might have heard the opinions of those who were pressing close to him, had it not been for the vigorous expedient which occurred to some, of laying into the tables with their walking canes, right merrily. This, however, was eventually stopped by the gas being turned out just as the second chairman (Mr. Dosabhoy having stated that the meeting was adjourned and left) was about to take his seat. This had the effect of causing parties to see that they were really all in the dark, which it would have required many hours' talking to do.<sup>2</sup>

Thus ended the "pleasant" evening of which the hopeful chairman had spoken in his introductory remarks. But the storm provoked by the fearless expression of such unconventional and unpopular opinions as abounded in the lecture did not easily subside. *The Times of India*, one of the most trenchant critics of the Crawford régime, while regretting that the disorder which prevailed at the meeting prevented the exposure of the "thundering mistake" that all

<sup>2</sup> *The Bombay Gazette*, 1 December 1871.

improvements effected in Bombay since 1865 were due to the late Commissioner, went on to observe with reference to Pherozeshah :

But that gentleman may thank himself for the disorder that occurred. It is all very well to claim tolerance for differences of opinion, but it is wasting time and patience for any one to thrust before the public sentiments and pleas that have already been disposed of by full debate. Life is too short, and the world too long to place its time at the disposal of ingenious or inconsiderate gentlemen like Mr. Pherozeshah, who for the mere sake of debate strive to persuade men against the evidence of their senses. We had not the excitement, pleasurable or tedious, of listening to the paper in question, nor have we had the opportunity of perusing it, though it is in print, but we are quite satisfied with the accounts given of it, from which we infer that, excepting a few paragraphs, it is a peculiarly perverse, erroneous and sophistical production.

The article ended by expressing surprise and regret that the lecture should have been allowed by the committee of the Association to be read at the general meeting. That this was also the general feeling of the members of that body was made clear by subsequent proceedings. A requisition signed by about thirty members was sent to the chairman, asking him to call a special general meeting to consider the desirability of expunging the paper read by Pherozeshah from the records of the Association. A meeting was accordingly convened on the 18th December in the Framji Cowasji Institute. Dr. Bhau Daji was in the chair, and there was a large audience. Pherozeshah was present but walked out with one or two of his friends, shortly after the commencement of the proceedings, followed by a "tempest of hisses, varied by shouts of 'Order, Order,' and vigorous hurrahs." The proposition for expunging the lecture from the record was carried by a large majority, and the chairman wound up the proceedings by declaring that the paper was to be considered "as not read and as not worth discussion," and by apologizing for the incident, and assuring the public that there would be no recurrence of it in the future!

It was one of the most characteristic incidents in the career of

Pherozeshah. It was at once a measure of his strength of character and political acumen. Few men would have ventured at his age to put forward views so utterly unpopular, and so greatly in advance of his times. But he possessed courage in a remarkable degree, and once his mind was made up on any question, he expressed himself with uncompromising independence, undeterred either by popular opinion or official displeasure. That his advocacy of Mr. Crawford was a little too vehement, however, must be admitted. He had been away for practically the whole of the period during which Bombay was "Haussmannized," and he was greatly struck by the transformation which he witnessed on his return. This accounted for his zealous partisanship of the masterful Commissioner, whose autocracy and extravagance had roused such intense feeling against him, and had so largely obscured the magnificent work he had done for the City. He was far ahead of the times in his ideas, and could rank amongst the greatest of town-planners.

The subsequent history of the municipal reform question may be briefly dealt with. In response to repeated and earnest representations, the Government went to the assistance of the Municipality, and a loan of Rs. 15 lacs was sanctioned by the Government of India on conditions which were most humiliating to the City. Thereafter, the work of reforming the municipal constitution was taken in hand, and a Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council on the 27th March, 1872, by the Hon'ble Mr. Tucker. Its provisions were of a most illiberal character, particularly those relating to the constitution of the Corporation. The latter was to consist of 80 members, out of whom 32 were to be elected by the Justices from among themselves, and 32 were to be nominated by Government from the same body. The remaining 16 seats were to go to ratepayers, half by election and half by nomination. There was to be a Municipal Commissioner as sole executive authority, and a Town Council in charge of the finances.

It is not surprising that these proposals with regard to the constitution were almost universally condemned. The Advocate-General, Mr. White, described the Bill as comprising the minimum of representation with the maximum of Government control, and as giving "a homeopathic dose of the popular elective principle and an

overwhelming dose of Government supervision." *The Times of India* characterised the introduction of the ratepayers' element as "the sprat thrown to the whale." As a result of these and other criticisms, and representations from various quarters, the Bill underwent drastic changes, and ultimately emerged as a more or less liberal measure. The number of members was reduced to 64, half of whom were to be elected by ratepayers, and a fourth by the Justices; the remainder were to be nominated by Government. A Standing Committee was created to keep an eye on the finances. The Government reserved to themselves the right of nominating the Commissioner, but the Health Officer was to be selected by the Corporation. It was a triumph of popular agitation, which, ill-directed at times, nevertheless achieved ultimately a fair measure of local self-government, which in essence has survived to the present day. It must be said for Mr. Tucker that he was not a narrow-minded reactionary. He declared that he would be glad to see self-government extended, but he was of opinion that this should be done "not by sudden jumps or leaps in the dark, but by gradual progress by well-considered concessions, which may be progressively enlarged and increased as the persons or classes to whom they have been granted show themselves fit for the boons given to them"—sentiments which from their constant repetition may be considered to be an article of faith with officialdom throughout the country.

It will be noticed how closely the Act of 1872 approximated to the ideals of municipal government so confidently expounded by Pherozeshah amidst obloquy and ridicule. Others, notably the redoubtable Mr. Maclean, have claimed the credit of this measure, just as there were not wanting people who arrogated to themselves many of the achievements of Mr. Crawford; but a just verdict must accord to Pherozeshah the merit of being the first among his contemporaries to diagnose the evils of the times, and to prescribe the right remedies. While others were preaching discredited formulas, he boldly stood up to outline a constitution, little understood at the time, but which was ultimately adopted, almost in its entirety, and which amended in 1888, has in its broad features endured for well-nigh eighty years, and has given Bombay the best municipal government in the country.

## CHAPTER VI

### A LITTLE ADVENTURE—THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT 1874–1877

WE must bridge over a gulf of two years during which there is nothing remarkable to record, and take note of a little adventure which befell Pherozeshah in 1874. It was in connection with the Bombay riots, which commenced with a brutal and unprovoked attack on Parsis by a mob of Mohamedans. The reason for this assault was a supposed insulting reference to the Prophet contained in a book written by a Parsi vaccinator, and bearing the pretentious title: "The renowned prophets and nations, comprising the lives of Zoroaster, Moses, Christ and Mahomet, and abridged history of the ancient Aryans, the old Parsees, and complete history of the Jews, the Christians and the Mohamedans, together with an account of the creation of the world from the earliest period to the present time." Out of deference to the feelings of the ignorant and the bigoted, this promising publication was suppressed by the Commissioner of Police, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Frank Souter, and the author was made to apologize for any affront he might have unintentionally offered. This was not enough for the fanatical and turbulent elements of the Mohamedan population. They broke out into open lawlessness on 13 February 1874, invaded Parsi places of worship, tore up the prayer-books, extinguished the sacred fires and subjected the fire-temples to various indignities. Parsis were attacked in the streets and in their houses and free fights took place all over the city. Thanks to the weakness and supineness of the Police and the Government, hooliganism had full play, and considerable loss of life and damage to property were caused.

The public was deeply agitated, and an outcry was raised against the authorities. Bombay was in a ferment, and the Governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse, and Mr. Souter were subjected to bitter criticism for having allowed a law-abiding community to suffer at the hands

of fanatical mobs. The attitude of the Commissioner was particularly hostile and objectionable, and contributed materially to the general feeling of bitterness. Deputations waited on the Governor asking for redress, and the newspapers were flooded with letters from indignant correspondents wanting to know what the Police and the Government were doing. Among these angry critics was Pherozeshah, who, the day after the riots had commenced, had gone out and seen things for himself in company with his friends Jamsetji Tata and C. M. Cursetji, and who in a letter to *The Bombay Gazette*, on the 14 February, narrated his experiences and strongly condemned the Police for their indifference and inaction.

The affair was not regarded as a quarrel between two communities, which they might be left to settle among themselves. The leaders of other communities, notably Narayen Wasudeo and Dr. Blaney, made strenuous efforts to bring about a reconciliation. The riots were ultimately quelled, when Sir Philip Wodehouse's Government awoke from their slumbers and the military was called out. But the Parsis were greatly incensed against the Governor, who, in reply to a deputation which waited on him, had told them that the conduct of the community had been injudicious and unconciliatory, and had advised it to make its peace with the Mohamedans, and to learn the lesson of defending itself without dependence on the authorities. The callousness of the Police had been even greater. There was a general desire, therefore, to give public expression to the outraged feelings of the community. A petition to the Secretary of State, the Marquis of Salisbury, was accordingly prepared, protesting against the conduct of the Government and the Police, and was adopted at a largely-attended meeting held on 12 April. In seconding the resolution for its adoption, Pherozeshah made a telling little speech, in which he laid emphasis on the fact that though small in numbers, the Parsis had a great name and traditions to maintain, and were among the most loyal subjects of the Crown. The warmth with which his remarks were greeted showed the growing popularity of the speaker, and the impression he was creating on the public mind.

The petition to the Secretary of State was an elaborate document, and was accompanied by photographs of the houses and fire-temples

destroyed or damaged by the fanatical Mohamedan mobs. The usual inquiry followed, and after some time a veil was quietly thrown over the whole affair. The Bombay Government emerged from the incident with their credit greatly impaired. Their amazing incompetence in handling the situation was the subject of comment all over India, and was criticized by even the English newspapers, in and outside the Presidency. It is refreshing to think that there were times when the bogey of prestige did not altogether succeed in stifling honest criticism by men who belonged to the same race as those whose actions were called into question.

## II

There was not much to arrest attention in the political life of the country during the early 'seventies. The brief but beneficent administration of Lord Mayo came to a tragic end amidst universal sorrow. During his time, a scheme of financial decentralization was inaugurated, which has been pronounced by Sir Henry Maine to be "much the most successful administrative reform which had taken place in India in his time." Lord Northbrook, who succeeded Lord Mayo, was a firm and liberal-minded ruler, whose administration was chiefly distinguished for the wise manner in which he conserved the resources of the country, always regarding himself in a special degree as the custodian of Indian interests. He left a peaceful and contented India, hardly conscious as yet of her lofty destiny, and seized with only a vague yearning for political liberty. The voice of the politician did not resound through the land. Such agitation as existed was confined to occasional outbursts against some high-handed act or policy. The Bombay Association, of which the guiding spirits were Sir Munguldas Nathoobhoy and Mr. Naoroji Furdunji, after a gallant struggle went out of existence. The local branch of the East India Association languished for a time, and came to an end a few years later. In Bengal, the Indian Association had still to come into existence, and platform oratory had not yet become a fine art in the homeland of the eloquent Bengali.

Spasmodic as were the political activities of the time, Pherozeshah found occasional scope for the exercise and development of his

remarkable powers. Though he had won general recognition for his talents, he had not yet made his mark in public affairs. People knew him mainly as a gifted speaker and a promising lawyer, who was quickly rising to eminence. Opportunities for distinction were soon to come to him, however, and one such was presented when the Volunteer Movement was started in 1877. It was the time of the Russian scare, and the Government deemed it necessary to strengthen the military resources of the country by the formation of a volunteer corps from amongst the European section of the population. A meeting in support of the movement was held in the Town Hall on 30 June 1877. The Governor, Sir Richard Temple, had come down from Poona to preside, and a large and distinguished audience, representative of all communities, was present, drawn partly by public interest in the project, and partly by rumours of an organized opposition against a movement of such an exclusive character.

After the resolution for the formation of a European volunteer corps had been duly moved and seconded in speeches which breathed patriotic fervour, the President asked whether any gentleman desired to address the meeting. Thereupon, Pherozeshah rose, and made a speech, as happy in expression as it was vigorous and manly in tone. He said he had no desire to oppose the movement in any way, but he protested most emphatically against the procedure which had been adopted, by which a proposal of an exclusive character had been placed for approval before a meeting to which representatives of all communities had been invited:

If the European inhabitants of this town had convinced themselves of the necessity and desirability of forming a volunteer corps among themselves, it was certainly open to them to have called a meeting of their own people, and to have taken such steps as they might think fit to carry out their project. But I must admit that it seems to me extraordinary conduct on the part of the promoters of this meeting to try to do this in the presence of all the inhabitants of the town. It seems to me, and though I say it with regret and diffidence I think I should say it boldly, that the native inhabitants of this town, when a proposition of this sort is

laid before a public meeting of the inhabitants, are called to attend ~~simply~~, if I may be allowed to say so, to assist at passing a vote of want of confidence in themselves. A proposition of this kind to a public meeting of the inhabitants of Bombay is simply asking the native classes to assist at their own execution.

Pherozeshah ended by moving an amendment that it was not advisable to resolve on the formation of a volunteer corps composed exclusively of Europeans, in a public meeting of the citizens of Bombay. Mr. Telang seconded the amendment, and observed with much force that he expected that, after the compliment which had been paid by His Excellency to the loyal and peace-loving character of the inhabitants, some reason would have been assigned for excluding natives from the corps. Mr. James Maclean thereupon said that 'natives' had been admitted to the meeting entirely as a matter of courtesy, and that their conduct showed great want of taste, knowing as they did it was a purely European movement. Pherozeshah undeterred by these criticisms insisted on his amendment being put to the vote, but when His Excellency pointed out, amidst cheers from one section and hisses from another, that it was a matter of great doubt whether according to the rules and practice of the Government a native volunteer corps could be formed, and that, if the audience thought it could be formed, it was open for it to hold another meeting and send up a representation to that effect, the amendment was withdrawn. Sir Raymond West poured oil on troubled waters by saying that the aspirations of Pherozeshah were those of a patriot, and though the latter's remarks were a little out of place, the speaker trusted the time would come for their realization.

The meeting was a lively one, which was not surprising, as the vague rumours of organized opposition which had been afloat in the city had rendered the atmosphere somewhat electric. While there was a disposition in some quarters to condemn the demonstration, *The Times of India* in its comments took a view of the proceedings which did it credit. It declared that it was greatly to the honour of the Parsis and the Hindus that once their protest had been recognised, they forbore further to trouble the meeting, which they

could easily have done, as they formed two-thirds of the audience, and might have negatived one resolution after another if they had been so minded. It was a great pity that one or two of the speakers had chosen to misunderstand the nature of the amendment, which had been so temperately moved by Mr. Pherozeshah as representing the Parsi community and seconded by Mr. Telang as representing the Hindus.

The question of raising, from amongst the people, a military force for defence purposes has been before the Government and the country for nearly half a century. When the first World War broke out, and appeals were made for funds, there was a general demand that educated Indians should be allowed opportunities to join the Army and to hold the King's Commission. It is interesting to note that Mr. Tilak and Dr. Paranjpye spoke from the same platform in support of this demand, and they appealed to the undergraduates of the University and other educated Indians to join the Army. Eventually, a University Corps of the Indian Defence Force came into being which many young men joined. This and other measures, however, have failed to touch the core of the problem. Not until British administrators have shed their suspicions and misconceived notions of Britain's role in India, shall we see a territorial army raised such as would be a source of strength not only to the country but to the defences of the Empire.

## CHAPTER VII

# THE ADMINISTRATION OF LORD LYTTON—A “PUBLIC” MEMORIAL—MEMORABLE MUNICIPAL DEBATES

1877–1880

As has been observed, there was little of active political life during the period which immediately preceded the administration of Lord Lytton. The spirit of reaction which animated the policy of that Viceroy roused to activity forces which were so long slumbering. A series of unpopular measures, resulting in widespread discontent, gave strength to the feeble currents of nationalism, and created a public opinion which gained in vigour and volume as injustice was heaped upon injustice. It was the beginning of a political consciousness which found organized expression a few years later under the impact of an event which convulsed all India.

One of the earliest and most discreditable measures of Lord Lytton's viceroyalty was the Vernacular Press Act, which aroused a controversy and occasioned an outburst of feeling, such as had not been witnessed before. The interest and importance of the subject demand a somewhat lengthy treatment. The measure was initiated by a telegram, dated 13 March 1878, from the Viceroy to the Marquis of Salisbury, the then Secretary of State for India. Among other things it stated that “the increasing seditious violence of the Native Press, now directly provocative to rebellion,” brought out the necessity of early and stringent legislation. The Viceroy proposed to introduce the Bill at once, as otherwise it would be hung up for a year, for the Government were leaving Calcutta on 18 March, and did not think it desirable to legislate on such a matter at Simla. The provisions of the Bill were outlined in the telegram, and the sanction of the Secretary of State was immediately requested, as the measure was to be passed “at a single sitting on the plea of urgency, which is not fictitious.” How far such breathless haste was necessary, may be judged from the fact that the matter had been under the

consideration of the Government for nearly two years.

Lord Salisbury wired his consent on 14 March, the Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council *the very same day*, and passed into law within a couple of hours. As Sir Erskine Perry remarked in an able minute of dissent, which is recorded in the proceedings of the India Council, "a retrograde and ill-conceived measure, injurious to the future progress of India, and inconsistent with all our past policy, is to be allowed to remain permanently on the statute book, because at a moment of supposed urgency, when no consideration of the subject was possible, the assent of the Secretary of State was, as I may say, extorted by telegraph."

Apart, however, from the very questionable methods employed to rush the Bill through—methods, which on Lord Lytton's own admission were adopted in order to *burke* discussion—the Act was utterly uncalled for, unduly repressive in character, and inspired by sinister motives. It was a Draconian piece of legislation, based for the most part on the Irish Coercion Act of 1870, and in some respects more stringent than the latter, which was a special measure brought into existence to deal with a special emergency. It armed the Government with powers to demand security from newspaper proprietors not to publish articles likely to excite disaffection, to forfeit, such deposits and to seize the plant, etc., of the paper after warning. There was also a clause providing that a newspaper could take itself out of the operation of the Act by submitting to a regular censorship. To quote Sir Erskine Perry again, "no imperial legislator could forge a more powerful weapon for extirpating an obnoxious Press."

Perhaps the worst feature of the Act was that it exempted from its operation all English newspapers, though in many cases they were the greater sinners. As Mr. (afterwards Sir) Arthur Hobhouse, one of the most distinguished lawyers of the time, observed, it was Englishmen who said the worst things of Government, and said them most continually; and he condemned the distinction as "class legislation of the most striking and invidious description, at variance with the whole tenor of our policy, and only to be justified by the most cogent proofs of danger from the maltreated class."

That there was no justification for such a measure requires little

demonstration. According to the mover of the Bill himself, the writings complained of and produced by way of justification, did not represent the sentiments entertained by the people generally, and there is no doubt "there was a good deal of mere froth and vapour in these foolish and mischievous articles." The Governor of Madras, the Duke of Buckingham, put this aspect of the case very clearly in his notable minute of dissent, in which he stated that while some of the extracts savoured of disaffection, there were many which in no way exceeded the limits of criticism by a free Press, though they stated unpalatable truths in strong language.

The Vernacular Press Act, or the "Black Act," as it was dubbed by the redoubtable Maclean, must be regarded as one of the most mischievous and odious measures ever introduced into this country. It created a storm of indignation, and vehement cries for its repeal went up from every quarter. The Government of Lord Lytton, very wisely for themselves, had given the public no opportunity of expressing an opinion on the Bill before it was rushed through the Council, and this preposterous procedure, adopted with the declared intention of burking discussion, had been sanctioned by such a responsible statesman as Lord Salisbury. But if the framers of the measure were spared public criticism during its passage in the Council, the fact of its being a *fait accompli* did not prevent the growth of vigorous political agitation, which practically continued till the obnoxious legislation was wiped off the statute book.

Among the criticisms which stand out from the mass of literature that has gathered round the subject, is a letter written by Pheroze-shah to *The Times of India*, less than a week after the Act was passed. It was a skilful and powerful assault on the Government position with regard to the measure. The writer asserted that the Vernacular Press had been guilty of no disloyal hostility to British rule. The worst that could be said of it was that on occasions it was guilty of angry recriminations, exaggerated generalizations and vulgar personalities. But such effusions conveyed no treasonable ideas to a native reading them with his natural knowledge of native modes of thought and expression. It must be admitted that this bold and somewhat sweeping statement of the position could not be justified by the facts, which showed the undoubtedly mischievous

character of some at least of the writings complained of.

Dealings with the dangers inherent in the vesting of such wide powers in the hands of the servants of the Crown, Pherozeshah observed that it was at all times difficult to draw the line between severe, though just, criticism of Government and its measures, and the licentious abuse of them, bordering on the preaching of sedition and the propagation of disaffection. If the judges of the distinction were to be the very men who were the objects of the criticism, they would be more than human if in course of time and by gradual stages all hostile criticism was not brought within the pale of the proscription. If the Vernacular Press was licentious and scurrilous, Pherozeshah went on to say, the system of licensing would but aggravate and intensify its mischievous tendency, and annihilate nothing but honest and useful criticism, particularly in the case of a Press in its infancy :

Moderate and respectable men, their functions not yet hardened into habits, would retire from the field without hardly a struggle. Violent and unprincipled agitators would thrive on the persecution which would furnish the very nourishment necessary for their existence. And while thus the sound and healthy political growth of the people would be indefinitely retarded, the Government would be deprived of all trustworthy sources of keeping itself well informed of the real inner feelings and thoughts of the people towards it. Deprived of free and sincere criticism, it would hardly know to steer its way through servile adulation or scurrilous abuse.

Sound as these observations are, they have a peculiar force when applied to the circumstances of a foreign Government, alien in spirit to the people over whom it rules. Such an administration is surrounded by peculiar difficulties, and its measures and policy are in a special degree liable to be misinterpreted and vilified. To win the confidence of those whom it governs, it must court the fullest publicity for its acts and intentions. As Sir Erskine Perry remarked in his minute of dissent, "ignorant as we are, and necessarily must be, of much that is seething in the native mind, of suffering that our

most carefully devised institutions may cause, of grievances never uttered to official ears, an unshackled Native Press with all its shortcomings and all its imperfections, is the only vehicle for affording the information so indispensable to good Government."

It remains only to note the circumstances under which the Act was repealed, at a time when Mr. Gladstone was in power at home, and India was under the administration of the most popular of all Viceroys, the noble-minded Lord Ripon. Early in 1881, the Marquis of Hartington, the then Secretary of State for India, sent a despatch to the Government of India, asking them to consider the desirability of repealing the Act. In a few short paragraphs, the despatch most effectively disposed of all the specious arguments which the advocates of the measure had put forward. It declared in unequivocal terms that no case had been made out for the enactment in question, that it had provoked strong feelings of discontent and resentment, and that there was nothing to show that it had resulted in any increased security to Government or other compensating advantages. The Secretary of State was further of opinion that if it was thought necessary, the Penal Code might be amended so as to deal more effectively with seditious writings. The Viceroy wrote back, concurring in the conclusions which Lord Hartington had arrived at, but postponing for some time the consideration of the question of the repeal of the measure, until the Local Governments had been consulted as to the desirability of altering the provisions of the Penal Code. Shortly after this the Act was repealed, having enjoyed an inglorious existence of three years, during which time it sowed far and wide the seeds of racial bitterness, which were to reap such a plentiful harvest in the years to come.

The year after the Vernacular Press Act was passed saw the enactment of another unpopular measure, and on this occasion the "poet viceroy" found himself in opposition not only to the general public but to even his own council, with the exception of the Finance Member. In the early part of 1879, the import duties on cotton goods were abolished, and a large revenue was sacrificed in the sacred name of Free Trade.

The import duty on goods stood at 10 per cent in 1860, and by gradual reductions had been brought down in 1875 to 5 per cent.

About that time, strong pressure was brought to bear upon Lord Northbrook by the ministry at home to do away with the impost. "Lord Northbrook stoutly refused to yield to this pressure. Though himself a strong free trader, he argued with unanswerable force that the duty was levied not for protection, but for revenue purposes, that its abolition would involve the imposition of other taxation in a form very distasteful to the Indian people, and that it was politically most unwise to have the appearance of sacrificing the interests of India to those of Manchester. He won the day." But the cotton manufacturers of Lancashire continued to be bitterly opposed to the duty as affording protection to the industry in India, and as hampering the development of their trade, in consequence. Their continuous agitation resulted in the passing in 1877 of a resolution by the House of Commons, which stated that "the duties now levied upon cotton manufactures imported into India, being protective in their nature, are contrary to sound commercial policy, and ought to be repealed without delay so soon as the financial condition of India will permit." The first step was taken the following year, when Sir John Strachey outlined the policy of Government, and followed it up by a remission of the duties on various articles, including the coarser descriptions of manufactured cotton goods. The next year a further inroad was made upon the Indian Treasury, and all cotton goods except those manufactured from finer counts of 30s and upwards, were freed from the impost against which Lancashire had so long been clamouring.

As mentioned above, this step was taken by Lord Lytton in opposition to the majority of his Council, whom not all the sophistries about Free Trade could win over to his side. This was done under a power reserved by law to the Governor-General to act on his own opinion alone, "whenever the safety, tranquillity or interests of the British possessions in India may in his judgment be essentially affected." Lord Lytton's use of the prerogative on such an occasion was criticized in Parliament by Sir George Campbell, who characterized it as an evasion of constitutional restraints, and a dangerous advance in the direction of personal Government. It aroused bitter opposition in India, all the more bitter, because of the feeling which was general that the interests of India had been sacrificed without

compunction in obedience to the clamour of the wealthy and powerful Lancashire interests. And all the while, the champions of the measure talked of justice and equity, and invoked the principles of Free Trade to their assistance.

The Indian public rated these hypocritical professions at their proper value, and indignant protests were heard in all parts of the country. A large and influential meeting was held in Bombay on 3 May 1879, in the Framji Cowasji Institute—the use of the Town Hall having been refused—at which a petition to be submitted to the House of Commons was adopted. The hollowness of the arguments for repealing the duties was forcibly demonstrated by various speakers, particularly by Mr. Morarji Goculdas, a Bhatia merchant of considerable ability and enterprise, and Mr. Telang, who made out a damaging case against the Government. In the organization of this demonstration, Pherozeshah took a leading part in company with Nanabhoy Byramji Jeejeebhoy and Mr. Telang. From the correspondence of that period, it appears that the three had to encounter apathy on the part of a few, and obstruction on the part of others. These were successfully overcome, and the demonstration was a complete success. The petition was read at the meeting by Pherozeshah. It appears very probable it was drafted by him, though there is no positive proof of that fact. The document was ably drawn up. It pointed out that the duty existed for the purposes of revenue, that the objection to its being of a protective character had been removed when the duty on coarser goods was abolished the year previous, and that a further remission at a time of debt, deficit, war and famine was utterly indefensible and in contravention of the resolution of the House of Commons referred to above.

A committee was appointed for making the necessary arrangements for forwarding the memorial to Mr. Fawcett, the indefatigable "member for India," for submission to the House of Commons, and Pherozeshah and his two friends were appointed honorary secretaries. There was a slight dispute in the committee as to who should sign the letter to Mr. Fawcett requesting him to submit the petition to Parliament and to bring on the subject for discussion in the House. Pherozeshah, always a stickler for such things, insisted on the letter being sent over the signatures of the secretaries, and his

view ultimately prevailed. Needless to state, the House of Commons turned a deaf ear, for it had only a month previous accorded its approval to Lord Lytton's action as the furtherance of a policy to which Her Majesty's Government had been pledged. Thus did British statesmen discharge their "sacred trust," and thus were £200,000 of India's revenue shamelessly bartered away "to win over the Lancashire votes for party purposes at home."

## II

The reactionary régime of Lord Lytton was brought to a close in April, 1880, with the change of ministry at home. His viceroyalty had proved disastrous to the best interests of the country, and raised forces of sullen discontent. About the same time, the administration of his chief lieutenant, Sir Richard Temple, came to an abrupt termination in Bombay. That restless administrator was seized with parliamentary ambitions, and with characteristic energy left the country within five days of his hearing that a general election was impending. Sir Richard Temple received the honours which are as a rule accorded to a retiring Governor. A meeting was held in the Town Hall at which the Chief Justice presided, and speakers and audience gave free play to their imagination in order to draw a glowing picture of their hero. There was a minority, however, which held different views about the administration of the retiring Governor. Pherozeshah, now rapidly coming to the fore, was one of the most determined among the dissentients. While many of his friends who disapproved of the movement were content with keeping aloof, he had made up his mind to offer active opposition to the idea of a public memorial. He went to the meeting accordingly, in order to record his protest, if necessary, but on being assured that it was a gathering of friends and admirers, he walked away. There was no help for it, as a senior counsel whose opinion had been taken, had advised that no protest could be made at a meeting of such a character.

This little comedy of public life would have been quickly forgotten, had not the over-zealous partisans of the Governor attempted to misrepresent the character of the demonstration they had

got up. Pherozeshah thereupon wrote to *The Bombay Gazette* a strong letter condemning the manœuvre. He began by protesting against the Town Hall meeting being regarded as a mark of approval set on the late administration by the citizens of Bombay, and pointed out that the requisition to the Sheriff was so worded as to make it a gathering of friends and admirers, and that if a contrary intention had been openly expressed, the proposal to erect a memorial to Sir Richard Temple would have encountered strong opposition. He objected to the movement all the more strongly, because it would help Sir Richard Temple's candidature for Parliament by being used as a mark of confidence of the people of the Bombay Presidency. These preliminary observations were followed by a vigorous criticism of Sir Richard Temple's administration, the attack being particularly directed against his attempt to transform the University into a department of Government. At the close of his slashing review, Pherozeshah observed that all the energy and enthusiasm of Sir Richard Temple's admirers were quite impotent to point to one single act of high statesmanship which could be fitly commemorated by the erection of a statue. On the contrary, his support of Lord Lytton in connection with the Vernacular Press Act, the repeal of the Cotton Import Duties and the License Tax were a testimony to his rule. In Pherozeshah's opinion the gravest of all charges that could be levelled against the late Governor was that he found Bombay a free and independent Presidency, and left it a servile appendage of the Government of India.

*The Bombay Gazette* wrote a long leader upon this letter in the course of which it remarked :

The canonisation of the greatest saint in the calendar was never considered complete and satisfactory until the devil's advocate had said everything to his detriment which imagination or industry could supply, and there is no reason why statesmen and administrators should be exempted from an ordeal to which even those in the odour of sanctity had to submit. Our correspondent addresses himself to his self-imposed task with great gusto, and he finds plenty of materials to his hand to pelt the reputation of the man whom all Bombay was delighted to honour.

Referring to the charge of servility to the Government of India, the *Gazette* observed that Pherozeshah seemed to have been asleep for some years, and was unaware of the great and fruitful change which had been wrought in Bombay since stiff officialism and cold routine stifled or rendered unavailing all life and all free opinion in Western India. It wound up a trenchant criticism of the letter by saying :

It may be that Mr. Pherozeshah and the handful of dissidents who share his views have some microphone of their own by which they can detect sounds of disapproval which do not reach the ordinary ear. But plain men who judge by what they hear and see, must be excused for coming to the conclusion that the late Governor was in the opinion of all classes of the community— barring of course a few honest eccentrics—a man who deserved well of the City and the Presidency of Bombay.

Pherozeshah's views found powerful support in another quarter. Ranade, whose rugged independence had rendered him suspect in the eyes of Government, writing in the *Quarterly Journal of the Sarvajanik Sabha*, pronounced Sir Richard Temple "a costly failure who, by his self-seeking and exaggerated laudation of his own acts, has degraded the noble standard of duty in the Indian service." While one may not agree with the harshness of these judgements, the verdict of history must support the stand taken by Pherozeshah and Ranade and hold up to ridicule the eulogies which were pronounced on Sir Richard Temple by his friends and admirers who have erected a memorial to him on the Esplanade in Bombay.

### III

After his memorable fight over the Crawford administration, Pherozeshah took little part in municipal affairs. His practice took him very often to the mofussil, where his acute intellect, ready wit and powers of cross-examination made him particularly sought after in criminal cases. He figured, therefore, but seldom in the debates which took place in the early years of the reformed

Corporation. When he spoke, however, he did so with characteristic vigour and independence.

One such occasion arose at the time of the election of Mr. Dossabhoy Framji to the chair of the Corporation. In view of the approaching visit of the late King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, the office was invested with special importance. After the candidate had been duly proposed, Mr. Maclean rose and indulged in an outburst of racial prejudice and arrogance typical of him. He thought the time had not come when any Indian could preside with advantage over such an assembly as the Corporation. An Indian could not perform the duties of chairman with the vigour and impartiality that would be displayed by a European. Besides, as Bombay owed its prosperity in a great measure to the English mercantile community, the honour of welcoming the Prince of Wales to an essentially English city should be conferred upon one who belonged to that race.

This outburst distinctly enlivened the proceedings, and evoked vigorous protests from all sides. The reply which Pherozeshah gave was dignified and to the point. He hoped the Corporation would never depart from the policy of looking straight at what was just and proper and best for the interests of that body, discarding all distinction of colour or creed. As members of the Corporation, they were bound to see only to merit and qualifications in making their appointments, and when they found them combined in European gentlemen, they were only too anxious and ready to recognize them; and the speaker doubted not that when they were found centred in Indians, Englishmen would never fall behind in recognizing them freely, generously and ungrudgingly.

On another occasion, when the Corporation was inclined to overlook an encroachment on the Victoria Gardens, Pherozeshah was uncompromising, and found himself in opposition to the majority of the members. It was a case in which religious susceptibilities were involved, but Pherozeshah took his stand on the rights of the Corporation, and expressed himself with a freedom resented by many of his colleagues. Except for such occasional interpositions in the debates, it does not appear he took any very prominent part in municipal affairs during the infancy of the new Corporation.

In the early eighties, however, some memorable debates which took place in the civic chamber drew the eyes of everyone upon the young member, who at once came to be recognized as a force to be reckoned with in local politics. The first of these arose in connection with the contract for the Malabar Hill Reservoir. Mr. Walton, the Executive Engineer, had allowed the contractor for the work to use stone extracted from municipal property on the Hill. This was done without the consent of the authorities concerned, and its effect was to benefit the contractor at the expense of the Municipality. It was a very questionable procedure, and the propriety of Mr. Walton's conduct was hotly discussed in the Corporation. The members were generally agreed that it deserved a severe censure, but some of them would not be satisfied with a mere expression of condemnation. Among these was Pherozeshah, who would have nothing but the dismissal of the officer responsible for such a grave dereliction of duty. He gave a notice of motion accordingly, urging Mr. Walton's removal from the post, and a special general meeting of the Corporation was called, on 25 March 1880, to consider the subject. His speech in support of the proposition was the longest ever delivered in the civic chamber, and the facts and arguments by which it was supported were marshalled with skill, vigour and lucidity. Even those who differed most strongly from him were constrained to recognize the ability with which what they called the case for the prosecution had been presented. The discussion which followed was remarkable for the heat and passions it evoked, and the mover of the proposition was subjected, particularly by the European members of the Corporation, to violent and bitter attacks, to all of which he was more than equal.

Party spirit ran high for days, and the eyes of all Bombay were turned to the Corporation. The matter was one in which the man in the street felt particularly interested. Not for a decade had such an issue presented itself, and the storm within the civic chamber was reflected in the atmosphere outside. After a prolonged debate lasting over half a dozen sittings, enlivened by numberless interruptions, objections and points of order, the proposition was thrown out by a single vote, and an amendment amounting merely to a vote of censure, which was moved by Captain Morland, was carried. The

defeat of the motion did not detract, however, from the value of Pherozeshah's performance, which was recognized even by those who found themselves completely at variance with him.

Equally strong was the attitude adopted by Pherozeshah towards a question which arose out of the application of the C. D. Act to Bombay. That ill-starred Act, designed to check the frightful ravages of venereal disease, had been tried for nearly two years in the city, and had been withdrawn in 1872 as it was found to be a failure. Four years later, an official report giving an alarming picture of the spread of the disease was forwarded to the Corporation, which imperfectly realizing the weight and strength of the case against legislation of this kind as a preventive of disease, saw no objection to the re-introduction of the Act into Bombay. But it guarded itself against any pecuniary liability by distinctly declaring that it was not in a position to supply any portion of the requisite funds. Thereupon, the Government of Sir Philip Wodehouse decided to drop the matter.

In 1880, Sir Richard Temple took up the question anew, and the Corporation was again approached for a contribution of Rs. 15,000, amounting to half the cost of working the Act in Bombay. An interesting debate took place, and the principles underlying the measure were discussed by various speakers, who dealt exhaustively with the moral and physical aspects of the question of state regulation of prostitution. Dr. Cook was the strongest supporter of the Government proposal, and in a long speech condemned the attitude of his opponents in uncompromising terms. Among other things he remarked that it was a mendacious statement to make that the public recognition of the evil by the state was degrading to the moral tone of society, for in India prostitution in its varied phases was "a recognized institution, recognized alike by custom and still worse by religion." It was not to be expected that such a remark would be allowed to pass unchallenged, and in his speech, which was an elaborate reply to all the arguments advanced by the supporters of the Act, Pherozeshah did not fail to deal with the allegation, though not as severely as one would expect. According to him, Dr. Cook's statement showed "the remarkable want of scientific accuracy with which Europeans in this country observe the

phenomena of native social life. It was a pity—he did not cast it as a reproach—but it was a well-known fact that with all their good wishes and all their good intentions, unsympathetic Englishmen were unable to understand the real nature and character of the various phenomena which were seen round them.” This was a pet line of argument of Pherozeshah, and he employed it whenever he found that some generalisation had been indulged in by any one on the strength of a superficial acquaintance with the habits of life and thought of the people of this country. It cannot be denied that in the instance in question the rebuke was well deserved, and Dr. Cook achieved nothing more than raise a little ‘breeze’ by advancing an argument which was as absurd as it was offensive.

The result of the discussion was that by a large majority the Corporation declined to share the cost of working the Act, but expressed its willingness to contribute Rs. 15,000 annually “for hospital accommodation for the relief of disease,” whenever the funds of the Municipality permitted it. The sequel is interesting, as it provides an instructive commentary on the relations between the Government and the Corporation at that period. The former chose to interpret the Resolution as a positive engagement to contribute Rs. 15,000, and accordingly proposed to deduct the sum from the outstanding balance of the Government contribution in respect of police charges due to the Corporation for the year. The Corporation flatly declined to agree to such a course, whereupon the Government forcibly withheld the sum. An appeal to the Government of India against this arbitrary procedure having failed, Pherozeshah moved that a representation be made to the Secretary of State. He urged with much force that the mode adopted for the purpose of forcing the Corporation to make a contribution was inconsistent with the independence of that body :

They were told that they were a body possessing certain rights of self-government in the interests of the city. This did not mean that they were allowed to govern themselves only when their views were in accordance with the wishes of another body. It was clear that self-government meant government according to the convictions and best intelligence of the body possessing it.

He urged, in conclusion, that as it was a question affecting the constitution under which they worked, it ought not to be allowed to stand where it was. A committee was thereupon appointed to draft a memorial, with Pherozeshah as one of its members. The representation drafted by the committee was approved in June 1881, and a vote of thanks was passed, special mention being made of Pherozeshah and Dr. Blaney. The decision of the Secretary of State, Lord Hartington, was in the nature of a complete victory for the Corporation. The Bombay Government was told that their action was impolitic, unfair and in violation of a distinct understanding, and that they should withdraw the order appealed against and refund to the Corporation the sums withheld under it. This decision was directed to be communicated to the body concerned, which, however, was not done. The Government of Bombay also demurred to the mandate of the Secretary of State on the question of refund. Lord Kimberley, before whom the matter came up in 1883, while adhering to the view of his predecessor as regards the impropriety of the proceedings of the Bombay Government, decided that such a strong measure as compelling a refund was not called for. On the main point he, however, upheld the objection of the Corporation, and the latter had the satisfaction of feeling that he had succeeded in upholding its dignity and asserting its independence, thanks to the efforts of the stalwarts within its ranks.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ILBERT BILL

1883

WITH the advent of Lord Ripon, a vast change came over the spirit of the administration. The misguided and reactionary policy of Lord Lytton had quickened the political consciousness of the people. The task to which his successor set his hands was to guide the movement along healthy channels, and to recognize the potent forces that were at work, rousing India from her age-long slumber, and giving strength and reality to the vague yearnings for freedom which were troubling her soul. The seeds sown by the great English statesmen, who threw open to her the vast treasures of Western learning, were rapidly beginning to bear fruit, and the universities were fast turning out men saturated with ideals of progress and liberty to which the country had hitherto been a stranger. The day predicted by Macaulay and others was dawning, when the people of India were ceasing to be satisfied with the blessings of law, order and good government, and were longing for the breath of freedom. The unifying influence of English education was manifesting itself, and common aims, ideals and grievances were gradually bringing together the educated men of all communities. From the Press and the platform the new spirit was vigorously being fostered, and on every hand were visible the signs of a general awakening. The forces which were at work, however, were scattered, lacked cohesion and strength, and required a powerful stimulus to weld them together. It came from a strange quarter and in an unsuspected manner, and the Ilbert Bill became the innocent instrument of an explosion which shook the country from one end to the other.

The history of that memorable measure, which aimed, in a not important particular, at removing an anomaly, is interesting. The criminal law of the land, as it stood in 1882, was that no magistrate —unless he happened to be a Presidency Magistrate—who was not a European British subject, could inquire into or try any charge

against a European British subject. The result was that no Indian judge or magistrate, however high his position, had any right to try even "the humblest European loafer in the mofussil," while his English subordinate enjoyed full jurisdiction. As far back as 1872, when the Criminal Procedure Code was being amended, an attempt had been made to remove the anomaly, but it had been defeated in the Imperial Legislative Council by a majority of seven to five, the minority, it is remarkable to note, including the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and Sir Richard Temple.

When the Code was being revised in 1882, Mr. Behari Lal Gupta of the Bengal Civil Service wrote to Sir Ashley Eden, the then head of the administration, pointing out the absurdity of the law. As officiating Presidency Magistrate in Calcutta, he had enjoyed full powers over European British subjects. When he was promoted to a more responsible position in the interior, he found himself unable to deal with the most trivial cases affecting Europeans. Sir Ashley Eden forwarded the letter to the Government of India, supporting Mr. Gupta's suggestions, but it was too late to incorporate them in the Bill of 1882, which had already passed through the first stage. The Government of India, however, invited the opinions of the Local Governments, and there being an overwhelming consensus of opinion among them in favour of the change, a separate Bill was introduced by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Courtney Ilbert in 1883, embodying the changes suggested. It proposed to invest Indian District Magistrates and Sessions Judges with the right to try European British subjects, and empowered Local Governments in their discretion to extend the powers to other officials belonging to certain specified classes.

The Bill was at once the signal for a tremendous outburst of feeling in the 'Anglo-Indian' community, from whom all over the country, Lord Ripon's Government was flooded with indignant protests. Meetings were held throughout India, at which violent speeches, which would probably be regarded as high treason at the present day, were made, in which both the Government and the people were abused in a manner that was perfectly outrageous. The meeting in the Town Hall at Calcutta particularly distinguished

itself by the violence of its criticisms of the Bill. It hissed, groaned and yelled at every mention of the Viceroy and Mr. Ilbert. One of the principal speakers, Mr. Branson, a well-known lawyer, who achieved an unenviable notoriety in the controversy over the measure, so conducted himself on the occasion, as to call for a rebuke from a correspondent who signed himself "an Englishman," who had the courage to enter a public protest against such utterances, whereupon the speaker felt constrained to offer a general apology to those whom he had so recklessly abused.

There were other demonstrations, besides this notorious meeting, of the anger with which the English population received Lord Ripon's attempt to establish equality before the law of all classes of His Majesty's subjects. The Viceroy was insulted and hooted at various public gatherings, and his state arrival in Calcutta was made the occasion of a demonstration on the part of the English and the Eurasian community, which was positively disgraceful. In the words of an eye-witness, "as the Viceregal carriage neared the point where the mob had congregated, the Viceroy was about to bow, but seeing the hostile attitude of the crowd, he refrained from doing so. No man of the crowd removed his hat, whilst hisses, groans, cat-cries, shrieks of 'Take off your hat,' and other demonstrations of public feeling created a hubbub perfectly disgraceful." The volunteers threatened to lay down their arms, and at a prize-distribution in connection with their corps, they received the Viceroy with studied coldness. Government House functions were tabooed by the English community generally, and at the St. Andrew's dinner the toast of the Viceroy "was received in silence and not drunk, only about twenty people remaining standing. A feeble attempt to get up a hiss was made, but promptly suppressed."

There were other unedifying exhibitions of the temper of an Imperial race. A Cambridge graduate distinguished himself by ostentatiously declining to join a dinner at which Mr. Ilbert was to take the chair, an attitude which bears a curious family resemblance to that taken up by an exalted individual, who recently suggested that no Englishman should consent to sit down at the same table with Mr. Montagu. A gathering of tea-planters hooted the Viceroy at a railway station, as he was returning from Darjeeling, and it was

with difficulty that Lord Beresford, who was on the staff as an A.D.C., was restrained from jumping into their midst to avenge the insult. How completely the British community had lost its head may be further evidenced by the story—which was widely believed at the time—of a conspiracy formed by a number of hotheads in Calcutta “who bound themselves, in the event of Government adhering to the proposed legislation, to overpower the sentries at Government House, put the Viceroy on board a steamer at Chandpal Ghat, and deport him to England round the Cape.” This extraordinary plot may well appear incredible, but according to Sir Henry Cotton, the facts were understood to have been within the knowledge of the Lieutenant-Governor and the Commissioner of Police. In another quarter, the planters were reported to have sworn that they would not accept the Bill if it became law, but “would deal in their own way with the first native magistrate who presumed to try a European.”

Such were some of the manifestations of anger and opposition against the Bill. Alone among the important centres of thought and activity, Bombay kept her head and established for herself a reputation for sobriety of thought and feeling, which have through the years been the distinguishing characteristics of public life in the city. Englishmen as well as Indians urged their respective points of view with refreshing vigour, but with an absence of bitterness and violence, which was in pleasant contrast to the ebullition of feeling in other parts of the country. This was in part due to the character of the relations which have always existed in this city between members of the various communities, and in part to the personality of the leaders of thought among Englishmen and Indians. As evidence of this, it may be mentioned that at a meeting of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce called to protest against the Bill, an amendment was moved by Mr. Nanabhoy Byramji Jeejeebhoy, which sought to declare that the Chamber had no concern with a political measure, which was outside the scope of its functions. The speaker and his two friends who supported him were given a quiet hearing, and after they had been replied to, the amendment was put to the vote and was lost. The proceedings throughout were of a most orderly character, and conducted with dignity on both sides.

The same moderation and regard for the decencies of public life characterized the great meeting of the citizens of Bombay held in the Town Hall on 28 April 1883, under the chairmanship of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy. The Hall was crowded to overflowing, and the leading representatives of the various communities were present in large numbers. They met under a sense of grave responsibility, for, as Dadabhai Naoroji wrote to Pherozeshah on the day of the meeting, the eye of all India was on them. The country anxiously awaited the lead which the Bombay leaders would give it, which made it all the more necessary for them to conduct themselves with restraint and dignity.

The principal resolution was moved by Budrudin Tyabji in an able and eloquent speech. It declared that in the opinion of the meeting the Bill was necessary for the just and impartial administration of justice, and was in consonance with the righteous policy which the British Government had followed in the administration of this country. The proposition was seconded by Pherozeshah, who, on rising to speak, was greeted with loud and prolonged cheering. In his speech he confined himself mainly to a discussion of the general aspect of the question. After referring briefly to the interest which Indians had in the passing of the measure, and pointing out that the privilege of which the Europeans talked was simply an immunity enjoyed by them from the consequences of a large class of offences committed by them, he went on to deal with the causes which underlay the extraordinary outburst of feeling occasioned by what was after all a very modest attempt to remedy an anomalous position. In the opinion of Pherozeshah, the attitude of the Europeans on this question almost seemed to justify the striking language in which Mr. Bright once defined the position taken up by certain 'Anglo-Indians', which was that "having won India by breaking all the Ten Commandments, it was too late now to think of maintaining it on the principles of the sermon on the mount." The policy of governing India on principles of justice and equality for all the Queen's subjects of whatever caste and creed had never been so openly and so furiously called in question. It was, therefore, necessary to examine carefully the foundations upon which British power in India rested, and upon which its stability primarily depended. The

conclusion, Pherozeshah went on to argue, which would force itself upon all thinking minds would be, that India had never been and would never be held by the sword, and that the policy of righteousness adopted by the wisest amongst English statesmen was not only a policy of justice, but also of enlightened self-interest:

When in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, India was assigned to the care of England, one can almost imagine that the choice was offered to her as to Israel of old: 'Behold, I have set before you this day a blessing and a curse: a blessing if ye will obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I have commanded this day; a curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I have commanded this day to go after other Gods which ye have not known.' England has chosen wisely and well, she has discarded the temptations held forth by the passion of selfishness, prejudice and vainglory, she has chosen to follow 'the Eternal that maketh for righteousness.' She has deliberately declared by the mouths of her greatest and most trusted statesmen, she has proclaimed it through the lips of Her Gracious Majesty herself, that India is to be governed on the principles of justice, equality and righteousness without distinction of colour, caste or creed.

It was, Pherozeshah continued, on the basis of this declared policy of the Crown that the measure must be discussed, and viewed from that point the case for the Bill was simply irresistible. He went on to show that there was not the slightest cause for alarm on the part of Englishmen, and that when all the bitter party feeling, had subsided, they themselves would smile at all the wonderful things they had said and done. The speaker concluded by drawing an amusing picture, which was appreciated by the audience, of Mr. Branson and Mr. Lal Mohan Ghosh—the two great protagonists of the English and the Indian point of view on the question—rushing into each other's arms the moment they met after the storm had subsided and Calcutta had resumed her normal aspect. Amidst the overwhelming mass of speech and writing which the Bill evoked, Pherozeshah's weighty exposition of the principles underlying it, and spirited

criticism of the opponents of the measure, arrested widespread attention, and the speaker emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the political development of the country.

The proceedings came to an end with the adoption of an elaborate and closely-reasoned memorial which made out a very strong case for the Bill. It was a remarkable meeting in every way, and it had a great effect on moderate opinion throughout the country. *The Times of India* in speaking of it remarked:

The meeting was sufficiently numerous to be considered a representative one, and at least two or three of the speakers displayed a knowledge of the English language, in its more subtle aspects, which is gratifying to those of us who believe that there is a great intellectual future before the leading Indian races. Indeed, three of the orators on the occasion, Messrs. Telang, Budrudin and Mehta, showed themselves to possess as great a mastery of our somewhat difficult idioms as Cicero ever did of the Greek, an accomplishment on which the famous Roman orator rather prided himself.

In its report of the meeting, the same journal referred to Pherozeshah's able performance, and observed that "with the aid of incisive argument, assisted by scriptural texts, which he quoted with all the gusto of an itinerant Methodist preacher, he made out a fair case in support of his view of the matter." It would be interesting to notice also what a critic of a different complexion had to say about the speech. In a series of letters to *The Englishman*, which attracted considerable attention at the time, a writer, who styled himself "Britanicus," and whose identity was no secret, at least in Calcutta, poured out day after day and week after week the most violent and offensive trash that ever was penned. This superior individual noticed at great length the proceedings of the Bombay meeting, and delivered himself of some elegant sentiments about the organizers of the demonstration, forming an apt commentary on the frame of mind of those whose cause he was championing to their obvious satisfaction. For Pherozeshah's performance, he had the same sneering contempt as he showed for the others, though he was less offensive in tone:

This Parsee Barrister has a talent for talking nonsense, and he talked it to his heart's content, and, if one may judge from the cheers, to the content of his audience also.

Further on, referring to Pherozeshah's analysis of the basic principles of British rule, which this astute critic by some logic construed into a threat, he remarked:

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It also shows not only that we must hold India by the sword, but that we must encourage as many loyal men as possible capable of using the sword to settle in the country, if we wish to hold India successfully against enemies who are not to be despised. In order to effect this desirable object, the only safe policy for Government to pursue is to encourage as many Britons as possible to settle in the country by throwing open the services to them, by fostering instead of hampering tea, indigo and other European industries, and by refraining from degrading Englishmen by subjecting them to the criminal jurisdiction of conquered and emasculated races.

We must now turn away from this sordid story of the passions and animosities roused by an ill-started measure which a noble-minded Viceroy sought to introduce in his anxiety to redeem in some manner the oft-repeated pledges of his sovereign. How his efforts were in a large measure frustrated may be briefly told. After the first introduction of the Bill, the opinions of Local Governments and officials were invited. It was found that they were greatly divided, and the Government of India decided to make a concession to the strength of racial prejudice and the clamour of a noisy agitation by dropping from the Bill all provisions conferring jurisdiction on Magistrates other than District Magistrates and Sessions Judges. The scope of the proposed enactment was thus greatly curtailed, and as it stood now it affected in practice the jurisdiction of only half a dozen Indians.

The amended proposals were approved by the Secretary of State in Council, and announced by the Viceroy at a meeting of the Legislative Council on 7 December 1883. English opinion, however,

was not satisfied by the concessions made, and threats of an explosion of race feeling were held out as freely as before. It appeared as if the opponents of the measure would be satisfied with nothing less than its absolute abandonment. This, the Government was not prepared to agree to, and the agitation continued in its violence. At this stage, the Honourable Mr. Evans of Calcutta on behalf of the Opposition made certain proposals for a compromise, which, though they were not accepted, opened the way for negotiations, which ultimately led to a settlement, or Concordat, as it was dubbed. This was in effect the adoption of a recommendation made by the Government of Bombay some months before, that European British subjects when tried before District Magistrates and Sessions Judges should have the right of being tried by a jury composed of a majority of their own countrymen. Thus was recognition at length accorded to the contention that an Englishman had a right to be tried by his peers, a theory in support of which the Magna Charta and various other solemn documents had been freely trotted out by the critics of the Bill.

The Concordat was received by the Indian community with considerable disappointment. Preparations had been going on for some time for strengthening the hands of the Viceroy by public meetings and memorials, as it was felt that some of his colleagues were inclined to surrender the principle of the Bill. But before anything could be done, the settlement was announced. The Anglo-Indian press hailed it as a triumph; the Indian public regarded it generally as in the nature of a capitulation. A section of Bengali opinion showed itself particularly hostile to the compromise, and things looked ugly. The statesmanlike attitude adopted by most of the Indian leaders at this critical juncture ultimately saved the situation. They realized that the violent and unscrupulous agitation of their opponents had succeeded in substantially whittling down the scope of the Bill; yet they recognised that something had been gained, and above all they were grateful to the man who had sought to give them equal laws and rights, and to strengthen their faith in the essential justice of British rule. Guided by these considerations, the majority of Indian leaders decided to uphold the Viceroy in the action he had taken.

When the Concordat was announced, the late Mr. Man Mohan Ghosh, one of the most eminent of public men whom Bengal has produced, wired to Pherozeshah, Mandlik and other Bombay leaders :

Concordat made under extraordinary pressure. Disapproved strongly, but if we assume hostile attitude, Viceroy surely resigns and Liberals are damaged. Think consequences and telegraph advice.

Mr. Mandlik consulted a few friends—Pherozeshah was away at Matheran, where he had built a fine house for himself—and wired back urging Calcutta leaders to support Lord Ripon in any course he deemed proper to follow. The attitude of the Bombay leaders decided the issue, and Anglo-India was deprived of the pleasure of seeing the Viceroy driven out of office by the very people whose cause he had espoused.

While there was substantial agreement as to the necessity of supporting the Government, opinions were divided on a subsidiary issue. Several of the leaders were in favour of the extension of the system of trial by jury to Indians, since the privilege had been conceded to European British subjects. In a letter which Pherozeshah wrote to *The Bombay Gazette* on the subject of the Concordat, he discountenanced this view altogether. He was inclined to consider the settlement as a grievous political blunder, for he regarded the concession of trial by jury an objectionable feature. "In the mofussil," he remarked, "where race feeling, as the recent agitation itself has helped us to discover, overrides furiously all sense of justice and right feeling, such a trial by jury would be in many cases a monstrous farce." He was, therefore, opposed to the extension of the privilege to Indians, on the broad ground of its being a mischievous and retrograde step calculated to affect the proper administration of criminal justice in the country. It was no use purchasing equality of rights at such a cost. Far more important was it to devise measures for guarding against unjust acquittals of European culprits at the hands of juries of their own countrymen. The remedy proposed by Pherozeshah was that the complainant in such cases should be given

the right of appeal to the High Court from a verdict of acquittal by a jury or from an inadequate sentence. The mere existence of such a right would exercise a chastening influence on judge and jury, compelling the one to be careful and deterring the other from being scandalously reckless.

Pherozeshah's letter greatly impressed Professor Wordsworth, among others, and he took the occasion to press again upon Mandlik the desirability of not asking for the extension of the right of trial by jury to Indians. The paragraph dealing with the point was accordingly dropped from the memorial which the Bombay Branch of the East India Association sent up to the Viceroy. As for the suggestion made by Pherozeshah, it does not seem to have gone further, for the reason that the Government had declared that they would not consider any proposals which would trench upon the settlement arrived at, by which they were resolved to abide.

The Bill in its amended form was passed on 25 January 1884, after a stormy career of close upon a year. It is difficult to appreciate at this date the exact reasons for the tremendous outburst of race feeling, which this modest measure, with which the name of Sir Courtney Ilbert will always be honourably associated, evoked throughout the length and breadth of the country. As was observed at the time, "it was not proposed to endow India with parliamentary institutions, or to hand over the Viceroyalty to Sir Madhav Rao. And yet they were in the presence of a state of feeling compared by Calcuttaites themselves to that which prevailed during the Mutiny." The fact was that, as Mr. Blunt remarked in his excellent little book *India under Ripon*, it was merely an accident that the particular ground occupied by the Ilbert Bill should have been chosen on which to fight the battle of race prejudice. What was really at stake—and this was brought out very clearly by Pherozeshah in his speech at the Town Hall—was the question whether India was to be governed by a system of 'benevolent despotism,' or by the application to her of those principles which British statesmen had repeatedly declared as the basic principles of British rule. This is apparent from the manner in which the Charter Act of 1833, the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 and other solemn pledges were sought to be explained away during the discussions on the measure.

Lord Ripon never did a greater service to India than when, refuting Sir Fitzjames Stephen and other ingenious interpreters of charters and declarations of policy, he said in a voice thick with emotion :

To me it seems a very serious thing to put forth to the people of India a doctrine which renders worthless the solemn words of their Sovereign, and which converts her gracious promises, which her Indian subjects have cherished for a quarter of a century, into a hollow mockery, as meaningless as the compliments which form the invariable opening of an oriental letter.... The doctrine, therefore, to which Sir Fitzjames Stephen has given the sanction of his authority, I feel bound to repudiate to the utmost of my power. It seems to me to be inconsistent with the character of my Sovereign and with the honour of my country, and, if it were once to be received and acted upon by the Government of England, it would do more than anything else could possibly do to strike at the root of our power and to destroy our just influence, because that power and influence rest upon the conviction of our good faith more than upon any other foundation, aye, more than upon the valour of our soldiers and the reputation of our arms.

Noble words these, and the people of India would fain have believed they represented, not an isolated opinion, but the settled policy of those who had been set in authority over them. The lessons of the Ilbert Bill agitation had sunk too deep in the minds of Indians, however, and they realized that "the justice of a cause was insufficient for its triumph in politics, and that the only path of victory lay through agitation."

## CHAPTER IX

### LORD RIPON AND NEW INDIA—CIVIC HONOURS—BOMBAY PRESIDENCY ASSOCIATION 1882–1885

LORD RIPON'S viceroyalty was rendered memorable by other measures of a less controversial but more momentous character than the Ilbert Bill. Among these, the scheme of Local Self-Government which he inaugurated may be regarded as the greatest monument to his sympathy and statesmanship. It was announced by the Government in May 1882, in a resolution which speaks eloquently of the political sagacity and high purpose which characterized Lord Ripon's outlook on Indian affairs. The policy by which the Government was guided was thus declared in a passage which has lost none of its force by the march of time and events:

At the outset, the Governor-General in Council must explain that in advocating the extension of local self-government, and the adoption of this principle in the management of many branches of local affairs, he does not suppose that the work will in the first instance be better done than if it remained in the sole hands of the Government district officers. It is not, primarily, with a view to improvement in administration that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education. His Excellency in Council has himself no doubt that in course of time, as local knowledge and local interest are brought to bear more freely upon local administration, improved efficiency will in fact follow. But at starting, there will doubtless be many failures, calculated to discourage exaggerated hopes, and even in some cases to cast apparent discredit upon the practice of self-government itself.

The Viceroy was further of opinion that with the advance of education, there was rapidly springing up a class of public-spirited

men, whom it was not only bad policy but sheer waste of man-power to fail to utilize. Intense enthusiasm was aroused throughout the country by this bold announcement of policy, and its translation into practice was eagerly looked for. The Bombay Corporation, like other municipalities, woke up to the necessity of having a more liberal constitution, and an animated discussion took place on the subject in the civic chamber in January 1883. Various suggestions were made by the Indian members for investing the Corporation with greater power and responsibility, and for reducing the excessive representation enjoyed by the Government and the Justices. On the other hand, the official section and its supporters were solidly against any sweeping changes in the constitution. Their contentions were answered by Pherozeshah in a speech in which he briefly reviewed the position, and skilfully made out a case for the reduction of official control. He laughed out the fear that an enlargement of the ratepayers' representation would give the numerically largest community a preponderance of seats in the Corporation, and he expressed his firm faith in the efficacy of a system of free electorates. Referring to the vast improvements effected in municipal administration in recent years, he declared that "it was the magic of the elective principle that had effected such a marvellous change." The discussion resulted in the appointment of a small committee, which included Pherozeshah, for suggesting amendments in the Act. The results of their labours and of those of other committees appointed from time to time will be noticed when we come to consider Pherozeshah's share in moulding the Municipal Act of 1888, under which the affairs of the city are administered even at the present day.

The popularity of Lord Ripon with all classes of Indians was immense, and it is not surprising that about this time a movement was started for memorializing the Queen-Empress for an extension of the Viceroy's term of office. A largely attended meeting was held in Bombay on 17 February 1883, under the auspices of the Bombay Branch of the East India Association, with Mr., afterwards Sir, Dinshaw Petit in the chair. Eloquent tributes were paid to the personality and policy of Lord Ripon by Dadabhai Naoroji, Naoroji Furdunji, Budrudin Tyabji, Byramji Malabari, Pherozeshah and

other speakers. The last named in moving the adoption of the memorial, a somewhat crudely drawn up document, gave reasons for their taking the unusual step of asking for an extension of the Viceroy's term of office. He said that it was "eminently desirable that the same mind which conceived a great measure should be secured to carry it to completion," and that there was no knowing what another Viceroy might or might not do. Lord Lytton's antics had completely dispelled the illusion that a Viceroy must necessarily be a great, good and large-minded man. There was, Pherozeshah added, another consideration which had reference to the scheme of local self-government, which he regarded as in the nature of an admission that the bureaucracy were "unequal in the long run to the task of paternally administering the affairs of a people of whose real inner life they have managed to remain profoundly ignorant," and that it was politically expedient that the people of India should be asked to co-operate in the work of governing their country. Both these contentions according to Pherozeshah, were totally repugnant to the officials, who "alternately frown or smile contemptuously at people who ignorantly imagine that any combination or organization of the inferior natives of the country could possibly come up to, much less excel, their trained and cultured capacities for administration." The success of Lord Ripon's great scheme being largely in the hands of these people, it was, therefore, imperatively necessary that Lord Ripon should continue in office for some time to prevent his policy being obstructed or quietly given up.

Lord Ripon did not continue in office, as everyone wished he would, and left the country actually before his term was over. The fate which overtook his scheme of local self-government need not be discussed. It is a melancholy record of obstruction and hostility on the part of a bureaucracy "armed with impenetrable prejudice," and the miserable progress the country has to show in the direction of local self-government, even more than a generation after it was inaugurated, is due as much to the system as to the men called upon to run it.

Before Lord Ripon retired from the country, his chief lieutenant, Sir Evelyn Baring, afterwards Lord Cromer, left India to take up his great work in Egypt, which was destined to change the face of the

land. His handling of the finances of the country had been marked by conspicuous ability, and his sympathy had made him popular with all classes of people. Before he retired, he was presented with an address adopted at a public meeting of the European and Indian inhabitants of Bombay, held in the Framji Cowasji Institute on 27 August 1883. In moving the adoption of the address, Pherozeshah discoursed in characteristic fashion on a variety of topics, and indulged in pleasant gibes at the omniscience of the "heaven-born service." Referring to the services rendered to the country by the Viceroy and the Finance Member, he said:

There are people who are struck most powerfully by the material strength of England and measure its greatness thereby. I for one see more cause for wonder and admiration at its being able to produce such men as Lord Ripon and Major Baring. It is impossible not to be amazed at the rare combination of intellectual grasp and wide moral sympathies which have enabled them to seize the essential conditions of unfamiliar Indian problems with a wonderful quickness of perception and sagacity of insight. This is all the more remarkable, when we observe how much the average Anglo-Indian civilian, after his long residence in this country, falls short in this respect.

Major Baring, the speaker continued, was an administrator of a somewhat rare type, altogether different from the so-called friends and fathers of the people, with whom they had become familiar. He had taught them dependence on themselves. At the end of his speech, Pherozeshah paid a graceful compliment to his English fellow-citizens for the support they had given to the scheme of local self-government for the inception of which Major Baring had been not a little responsible. It was a matter of congratulation that "that scheme has secured a kindly reception at the hands of the European mercantile community of Bombay, who, ever since the days of James Forbes, have always maintained excellent relations with the natives among whom they have lived and worked."

The eternal question of the Civil Service regulations demands a brief notice in this review of Lord Ripon's administration. During

the time of Lord Northbrook, the then Secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury had reduced the age-limit for candidates for the Civil Service to 19, against the wishes of the Government of India and the Civil Service Commissioners in England. The step had been strenuously opposed by public opinion in the country as dealing "a crowning blow at the fair and regular admission of natives to the Civil Service." Time had shown that the fears entertained by the opponents of the measure were thoroughly justified. The chances of Indians entering the Service in large numbers had become more remote than ever. Only a very precocious youth could be expected to succeed at the absurdly early age of 19 in passing a competitive examination for which he had not been prepared from his boyhood. As a matter of fact, out of twenty-eight candidates who within recent years had presented themselves for the examination, only one had been able to get through.

As consciousness of these difficulties forced itself on the public mind, and as dissatisfaction with the establishment of the Statutory Civil Service began to grow in volume, agitation was started for securing for Indian candidates more equitable conditions than the rules and regulations in force then provided. It seems the question had also engaged the attention of Lord Ripon's Government, for in April 1884, Pherozeshah received a letter from the Private Secretary to the Viceroy inviting his opinion on the subject, as the Government were anxious to know the views of leading citizens. In various parts of the country meetings were held and petitions were adopted, asking for the raising of the age of candidates as the first step towards the establishment of a free and fair test. It was widely felt that the idea was to ultimately shut out Indians altogether from the Service, and this was what Lord Lytton had actually suggested to the Secretary of State in 1878. He thought it "highly objectionable to encourage the Natives to enter into the Service which ostensibly offers them, as legitimate objects of ambition, posts to which it is notoriously impossible to appoint or promote them." He was, therefore, in favour of shutting the door altogether, but as the reduction of the age-limit was sure practically to achieve the same result, he had not pressed the point.

It was against this sinister device to rob Indians of the privilege

granted to them by legislative enactment, that public opinion once more raised its voice, stimulated by the Ilbert Bill agitation which had brought the question into prominence. A meeting was held in Bombay on 2 September 1884, at which Mr. Budrudin Tyabji moved that the regulations regarding the admission of candidates to the Service were unsatisfactory, and did not fairly meet the legitimate claims of Indians. In seconding the proposition, Pherozeshah began by attacking the superior critics who had advised Indians to desist from political agitation. He likened their attitude to that of Sir Joseph Bowley—an illustration from Dickens which Pherozeshah was very fond of pressing into service—"the friend and father of the poor," whom he used to advise to give up thinking for themselves, leaving him to do it for them. The speaker was of opinion that "superior though the English might be in the possession of many good qualities, they still required to a certain extent their guidance even in the shape of political agitation, because in the first place the rulers required to protect themselves from their selfish instincts, and secondly from the ignorance under which they laboured with regard to the people among whom their lot was cast." The establishment of the Statutory Civil Service was one proof of this. In spite of protests from various quarters—in which he (Pherozeshah) had joined—the Service had been instituted, and now those in authority themselves came forward to condemn it. As for the question of the reduction of the age-limit, all he would say was that it had taken away from Indians the last chance of getting into the Service by open competition. Even if that disability were removed, there were other difficulties in the way, and therefore, "the only statesmanlike and far-sighted policy, which would satisfy the just aspirations of the natives of India, was contained in that portion of the memorial, which says that the examination should be held in this country under the same tests as in England, at one or more centres, and that the passed candidates should then be sent to England." This was the view he had maintained from the very first, and which he continued to press on the attention of the various Commissions on Public Service before whom he was invited to give evidence from time to time.

No account of Lord Ripon's epoch-making viceroyalty can be

complete without a reference to the unparalleled demonstrations which took place in his honour when he retired from the country. The sum total of his achievements in the field of legislation and administration was by no means imposing. But the people of India felt that they had in him a high-minded ruler who had striven under great difficulties to raise them to the dignity and stature of manhood, and whose sympathy and statesmanship had restored their confidence in the essential justice of British rule in India.

It is not surprising, then, that the people of India gave the departing Viceroy a royal send-off. Bombay surpassed herself on the occasion, and the demonstrations that took place were unequalled for their splendour and enthusiasm. A mass meeting was held in the Town Hall on 29 November 1884, with Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy in the chair. The place was packed to overflowing, and a crowd of nearly 15,000 people had collected outside. It filled the steps, blocked the roadway, and overflowed into the Elphinstone Circle Garden. There was a holiday atmosphere everywhere, and the proceedings were most enthusiastic and unconventional. There were eighteen speakers, including such honoured leaders as Dadabhai Naoroji, Mandlik, Tyabji, Telang and Pherozeshah. The speeches were punctuated by frequent applause, and occasionally by bursts of music which came at intervals from various bands stationed outside the place. At one moment, number of banners bearing all sorts of mottoes made their appearance in the hall, and caused a lively diversion. The speakers found a very appreciative audience, which refused to be affected either by the discomfort of its surroundings or the length of the proceedings.

The first resolution expressed the deep sense of gratitude of the people of Western India to the Viceroy for his eminent services to the country. The proposition was seconded by Pherozeshah in a notable speech. He referred to the hold which Lord Ripon had on the millions of this country. *The Times of India* had suggested that it was because Indians seemed to recognise Lord Ripon's generous goodwill towards them as the highest attribute possible in a Governor-General. "Europeans, however," it added, "demand something sturdier in a statesman officially responsible for the prestige of England and for the welfare and safeguarding of two hundred and

fifty millions of people." Pherozeshah exposed the hollowness of this argument by reviewing at some length the trend of British policy in India. He showed that the principles laid down by the great statesmen of the mid-Victorian era had been firmly grasped and deliberately adopted, and in support of that he told a story of Mountstuart Elphinstone related by General Briggs who had served under him:

On my observing in a corner of his tent one day a pile of printed Mahrathi books, I asked him what they were meant for. 'To educate the natives,' said he, 'but it may be our high road back to Europe.' 'Then,' I replied, 'I wonder you as Governor of Bombay have set it on foot.' He answered, 'we are bound under all circumstances to do our duty by them.'

This lofty ideal had gradually come to be discarded, and in its place had been set up the fetish of efficiency. In the opinion of Pherozeshah, the vigorous conqueror and statesman was turning into the energetic administrator, and was losing his old cunning in statesmanship. As the phenomena that he was witnessing around him were causing him uneasiness and perplexity, a new policy had gradually come to be adopted, which had found its culmination during the reactionary régime of Lord Lytton. The situation that had been created in consequence was full of danger, and it was Lord Ripon's lasting glory that he had retrieved it by his sympathy and statesmanship, and had set up British rule on a firmer foundation. If his administrative achievements had not proved startling, and if, as was alleged, he was leaving the country full of "amiable regrets," it was not for those who had obstructed his policy as being revolutionary now to turn round and cast it as a reproach in his face. Such an attitude, according to Pherozeshah, was the height of inconsistency. It was unjust, besides, to Lord Ripon, who was leaving India with the consciousness that he had done his duty and had earned the goodwill of the millions entrusted to his care:

In giving an account of his stewardship to his country and its royal mistress, he can point to them as the surest testimony of how he has discharged himself of the great trust reposed in him,

and say that he has left peace where he found war, he has left content where he found uneasiness and alarm, that he has restored the prestige of England—the prestige of its good faith and honour—and that he has left the loyalty of the people firmly anchored in their confidence and gratitude instead of in fear and force.

In noticing this speech, *The Times of India* attempted to justify what it had stated with regard to Lord Ripon, and repeated that, except for the goodwill of a large section of Indians towards him individually, he was leaving the country as he found it. *The Bombay Gazette* was more just to the Viceroy, and full of appreciation of Pherozeshah's speech :

Mr. P. M. Mehta seconded the motion (moved by the Honourable Mr. Badrudin Tyabji) in an address more carefully elaborated, but strikingly effective, his vigorous and practised delivery rendering his points audible at times when the most experienced of public speakers would have been sorely tried. Perhaps his happiest illustration was the repetition of the conversation between Lt-General Briggs and Mountstuart Elphinstone, whose statue immediately faced Mr. Mehta.

One may expect that Pherozeshah must have experienced some difficulty in eulogizing Lord Ripon, for in one character or another he had to make a number of speeches about the departing Viceroy. As Chairman of the Corporation,—an honour, which, as will be presently seen, had come to him at a comparatively early age in recognition of his services—it was his privilege to ask Lord Ripon to lay the foundation-stone of the handsome pile of buildings in which are housed the present municipal offices. In inviting him to perform the ceremony Pherozeshah observed :

My Lord, we do not ask you to perform the ceremony for the purpose of securing the *eclat* of an imposing ceremonial. We ask you, because in this city, which claims with pardonable pride to be the favoured abode of free municipal institutions, we hail you as

the apostle, who, with keen and marvellous appreciation, has done more than any other to extend and develop the true principles of local self-government.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Ripon's reply was a graceful tribute to the energy and public spirit which had made the Bombay Municipality a model for all India. He had been struck, he said, by the Address which the Corporation of Bombay had presented to him on his arrival, and by the bearing and demeanour of those who had presented it to him. This had led him to inquire into the constitution of that body and the character of the work it was doing. These inquiries had convinced him of the capacity of the people of the country for managing their own local affairs under favourable circumstances. From that conviction there had been born in his mind the first conception of that policy for the further development and extension of local self-government which his Government had since pursued. His Lordship concluded with the hope that on the foundation-stone laid that day would be raised not merely an imposing building, "but a noble superstructure of good work done, of education extended, of sanitation advanced, of communications improved, of sickness alleviated, which will form a monument more enduring than marble for those who have laboured together for the public good."

The address which had been adopted at the public meeting to which reference has been made, was presented to Lord Ripon, along with scores of others from all parts of the Presidency in the Town Hall on 18 December 1884. It was read by Sir Jamsetjee, who headed a deputation consisting of Budrudin Tyabji, Dinshaw Petit, Nanabhai Haridas, Kashinath Telang, Pherozeshah and others. Other deputations followed in rapid succession, until on the platform behind Lord Ripon there rose a regular rampart of silver caskets, carved boxes of all sorts, volumes of parchment, rolls of signatures and illuminated addresses on silks and satins. When what seemed an almost interminable procession had come to an end, Lord Ripon rose and addressed the assembly for an hour. At the conclusion of a striking exposition of the aims of his policy, he gave expression once again to his conception of England's mission in India:

<sup>1</sup> 19 December 1884.

If she is to fulfil the mighty task which God has laid upon her, and to interpret rightly the wondrous story of her Indian empire, she must bend her untiring energies and her iron will to raise in the scale of nations the people entrusted to her care, and to impart to them gradually more and more the richest gifts which she herself enjoys, and to rule them not for her own aggrandizement, nor yet for the mere profit of her own people, but with a constant and unwearied endeavouring to promote their highest good. She is bound to labour, she must labour for their material advantage, but not for that alone; she must devote herself yet more to their intellectual development, to their political training and to their moral elevation.

Is there any wonder that the statesman who not only preached, but unceasingly endeavoured to translate into practice such lofty ideals drew to himself the reverential regard and unquestioning loyalty of the millions whom he governed, and was honoured on departure with demonstrations of popular feeling such as even kings might envy? The demonstrations were so unparalleled and unique, that soon after, there appeared in the columns of the *Pioneer* a remarkable article headed "If it be true, what does it mean?" This contribution has since been attributed to the pen of a distinguished civilian, the late Sir Auckland Colvin, who succeeded Sir Evelyn Baring as Finance Member. His diagnosis of the situation is full of instruction and interest.

India needs more men of the sympathy and insight of Lord Ripon. It was fully a generation before another like him appeared on the scene.\* But if the pursuit of a soulless efficiency is no longer to be the keynote of British policy, we shall constantly and increasingly need statesmen animated by the ideals which will keep the memory of Lord Ripon for ever enshrined in the minds of a grateful people.

## II

It was in the fitness of things that the foundation stone of the new municipal offices, to which reference has been made, should have

\* Lord Hardinge, of Penshurst.

been laid during the chairmanship of a man who had contributed more than any other to the reputation for efficiency and public spirit of the civic body they were to house. The Corporation put him in the chair at a comparatively early age in recognition of the notable part he had played in civic affairs. The honour owed nothing to canvassing or wire-pulling; it was a spontaneous tribute to the ability and public spirit of which Pherozeshah had given such ample proofs. The proposition was placed before the Corporation at its meeting of 7 April 1884, by Mandlik—himself a distinguished worker in the public cause—who referred to Pherozeshah as a colleague of tried ability and experience who was sure to enhance the reputation of the chair. The motion was seconded by Sir Frank Souter, whom he had attacked so slashingly in connection with the Hindu-Mohamedan riots, and supported by Dosabhoi Framji, who reminded the Corporation of the scheme outlined by Pherozeshah during the discussions on the Crawford administration, which had been laughed out at the time, but had found a place in the Act of 1872. The proposition having been unanimously passed, Pherozeshah briefly thanked his colleagues for the honour they had done him. One remark which he made must be rescued from the commonplaces which are customary on such occasions. He said that he was firmly persuaded that a citizen of Bombay could not more usefully or honourably employ such opportunities as he might possess for public life than in taking an active and intelligent interest in its civic administration. How earnestly he acted up to this conviction is a matter of history. Few phases of his brilliant and many-sided career have evoked greater admiration than the enthusiasm with which for more than forty years he devoted his splendid gifts to the administration of local affairs.

There was general approval of the honour done to Pherozeshah. *The Bombay Gazette* referred to him as a rising barrister who deserved praise for the abnegation he displayed in making a lucrative practice yield to the demands of a laborious and unpaid office. It observed that the right principle to be adopted in choosing the chairman was that a European and an Indian should fill the chair alternately, but since the choice of the Corporation had fallen upon Pherozeshah, it would only say that no member could have been

selected who was personally better qualified for the post.

After a year of office, during which Pherozeshah won the admiration of everybody by the manner in which he discharged his onerous duties, he was re-elected chairman for another year. On this occasion, as also when his term came to an end, graceful tributes were paid to him by Sir Frank Souter, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Mr. Telang and others who spoke of the tact, ability, and dignity which their colleague had displayed, and which they had confidently expected from him when they had appointed him to the office. *The Times of India* endorsed these compliments when it said that the Corporation never had a better chairman. It was not until twenty years later, when King George V was about to visit these shores as Prince of Wales, that the Corporation once again invited their leader to preside over their deliberations and lend dignity to the position, at a time when it was invested with special importance in the eyes of the public.

For Pherozeshah, these were years of a busy and lucrative practice, which was greatly affected by the demands which the presidential chair always makes on the time and energy of the member who occupies it. In a country where there is no such thing as a leisured class, such work often entails a considerable sacrifice. Pherozeshah cheerfully paid the price. It is true he was not exactly a man to "scorn delights and live laborious days." He was fond of the good things of life, and his tastes and habits were inclined towards luxuriousness. He had built for himself a pretentious house at Nepean Sea Road, used to drive about in a carriage and pair, and affected expensive clothes. As soon as he had earned enough, however, to satisfy his extravagant tastes, the service of the public claimed him. Very often he was known to forego a handsome fee, merely in order that he might be able to attend some meeting of the Corporation. Had he so chosen, he might have amassed a fortune. As it was, he left behind him a modest competence, and a record of service and achievement which few among his countrymen have ever equalled.

An incident which threatened to change the whole tenor of Pherozeshah's existence at this period may be mentioned in this place. Towards the end of 1884, the Diwanship of Baroda fell vacant, and Pherozeshah was not unwilling to take it up, offering as

it did so much scope for his talents and energies. Sir Frank Souter, with whom he was on friendly terms, interested himself in the matter, and communicated with General Watson, who was Resident at the time. The idea fell through, however, and what might have proved a most interesting chapter in the history of Baroda came to be thus unwritten. What Pherozeshah could have achieved in so wide a field is a topic on which it would be idle to speculate. It was fortunate, however, for Bombay and the country generally that the thing did not come to pass, for they could have ill afforded to lose his services in one of the most formative periods in their history.

## III

We have seen how the Ilbert Bill agitation and the enlightened policy of Lord Ripon roused into vigorous activity forces which had been driven underground—thanks chiefly to Lord Lytton's Gagging Act—and which had lain more or less dormant all these years. All over the country, the educated classes perceived the necessity and advantages of organized agitation for the redress of political grievances, and the significance of recent events was not lost on them. As one of the first fruits of this general awakening, the Bombay Presidency Association was established in Bombay in January 1885. The old Bombay Association of which Mr. Naoroji Furdunji had been the life and soul, had practically gone out of existence, and the Bombay Branch of the East India Association, having no independent existence, was unable adequately to voice the popular sentiment and to defend the rights of the people. Attempts had been made to revive these organizations, but they had proved unsuccessful. Changed times require new vehicles of thought, and "with the growth of political life, new aspirations arise, and these aspirations require an organization to give them due expression, and the organization in its turn watches, regulates, develops and directs national aspirations." Thus it was that Bombay felt the necessity of having a new body which would provide adequate opportunities for the exercise of the talents and energies of her citizens.

The Association was inaugurated at a public meeting held on 31 January 1885, at the Framji Cowasji Institute, in response to an

invitation issued by the triumvirate which was at this period at the head of all public movements, Tyabji, Telang and Pherozeshah. The last two were appointed honorary secretaries along with Dinshaw Wacha. There were the usual speeches, and the usual orators, and the new Association was started amidst considerable public enthusiasm.

In his speech on the occasion, Pherozeshah quoted with approval from an address which Lord Dufferin had given ten years before to an audience at Quebec, in the course of which His Lordship had stated that no man, especially in a young country, whatever his occupation, was justified in dissociating himself altogether from all contact with political affairs. The speaker endorsed this view, and pleaded for the co-operation of young men in the task of national regeneration. He believed in their capacity, and looked forward to a time when they might produce men like Dadabhai Naoroji. But before such a consummation was achieved, he asked them to devote themselves even at some sacrifice to the cause of the country. Here a voice from the audience interjected "as you are doing," at which there was general cheering. On the conclusion of the speech, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy was appointed the first President of the Association, and several Vice-Presidents were elected from among the leading men of every community.

The Association which thus came into being showed considerable activity in the early years of its existence. By resolutions, memorials and public meetings, it focussed the general feeling of the community on all matters of common interest. Nothing seemed too trivial for its notice, if it involved a question of principle. It protested repeatedly and vehemently, for instance, against the appointment of Mr. Macleod (as he then was) to the second Judgeship of the Small Causes Court. It did so on principle, little knowing that the youthful and inexperienced lawyer whose appointment it was so stoutly opposing, was destined to occupy the highest position in the judiciary of the Presidency with the general approval of the public and the profession. The interest which the public took in the Association was somewhat lukewarm and its activities were mostly due to the energy and enthusiasm of the three men who controlled its destinies, a fact which gave occasion for the sneer in which Lord

Harris indulged after his retirement, when he spoke of it as "the triumvirate known as the Bombay Presidency Association."

One of the earliest acts of the Association was to organize the carrying on of energetic propaganda work in England. The moment was propitious, for a general election was imminent, Mr. Gladstone having decided to appeal to the country against the House of Commons which had rejected his Home Rule proposals. In view of the growing interest which Parliament was beginning to evince in Indian affairs, and the growth of what might be called an Indian party, it was felt that there was a unique opportunity of educating the English electorate as to the wants of India, and of persuading it to support candidates who had made her cause their own. This view had derived strength from a letter which an "English Elector" had written to a Bombay newspaper, in which he had pointed out the nature of the opportunity and made some fruitful suggestions. The Council of the Presidency Association had thereupon decided to take the matter up, and appeal for co-operation to the other Presidencies.

The response was encouraging, and it was decided to circulate a large number of leaflets in England, dealing with subjects of importance to the well-being of the people of India. Later on, at the instance of the Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona—whose leading spirit was Ranade—which had collected a considerable sum of money for propaganda work in England, it was arranged that three delegates, representing the three major provinces, should proceed to England to plead for justice at the hands of the British electorate, and to interest it in the problems of India. Mr., afterwards Sir, Narayan Chandavarkar was appointed as the representative of Bombay, the other delegates being Man Mohan Ghosh from Bengal, and Ramaswamy Mudaliyar from Madras.

To sanction these proceedings, and to concert other measures for carrying out the objects in view, a meeting of the members of the Bombay Presidency Association was held in September 1885, at which various speakers pointed out with force the necessity of educating English public opinion. One of them quoted from an article in the *Daily News*, in which the writer had observed:

It is of particular importance that Indian opinion should be

ascertained and studied in this country at the present time. For there is a set of pretentious busybodies, who on the strength of having read a little Indian history, and imbibed a good deal of the worst sort of Anglo-Indian prejudice, are posing as the sole authorities on Indian subjects.

Among the resolutions adopted was one approving of the distribution and publication of a general address to the electors of the United Kingdom on behalf of India. Another proposition, moved by Dadabhai Naoroji, declared that the following candidates on account of their services and their publicly expressed opinions were deserving of the support of the Indian people: The Marquis of Hartington, Sir J. Phear, Captain Verney, and Messrs. John Bright, J. Slagg, Lal Mohan Ghosh, William Digby, W. S. Blunt, S. Keay, S. Laing and W. C. Plowden. The resolution further repudiated the claims of Sir Richard Temple, Mr. J. M. Maclean, Sir Lewis Pelly, Mr. A. S. Ayrton and Sir Roper Lethbridge to speak on behalf of the people of India. How far the British elector was influenced by these recommendations will be mentioned later on. That, however, was a matter which did not trouble the mover of the proposition, who put his case with characteristic energy and optimism. He was followed by Pherozeshah, who made some noteworthy observations. Differing from Mr. Tyabji, who thought they could appeal successfully to both the great parties in England, and going a little beyond Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah was strongly in favour of Indian questions being made party questions. He urged that the time had come when they must submit Indian problems to the keen and searching criticism of party warfare. No doubt, the interests of India would sometimes suffer in the process, but in the end "the intellect and conscience of England would move, as it has always done in the long run, in the path of true progress and beneficent reform." The fallacies and misrepresentations of their opponents would never be effectively exposed till they were examined by the sharp and sifting criticism of party warfare.

It may be said for this point of view that though it did not find general favour at the time, and has often been since condemned in certain quarters, its wisdom generally came to be recognized in later

years. As a matter of fact, within a very short time, Mr. Man Mohan Ghosh had sorrowfully to confess at a meeting of the Association called for the purpose of hearing an account of the mission, that in spite of the advice they had received, the delegates had found it very difficult to keep clear of party politics. They had discovered that it was impossible in a country constituted like England to obtain a hearing on any political question unless one appealed through the medium of one party or another, and that they could only look to the Liberals for redress of the country's wrongs, and to the Liberal constituencies for sending to Parliament men who would be in sympathy with the views of New India.

Indian questions have never become party questions in the strict sense of the term, but it cannot be disputed that the impetus to reform has, with few exceptions, come from Liberal statesmen. If their party generally could have been induced to take a keener and more intelligent interest in Indian problems and to include them in their programme, our political progress would certainly have been much quicker. But it would be too much to expect the average stay-at-home Englishman to bother his head about questions affecting subject races six thousand miles away, particularly when he has placed them in the capable hands of a "Heavenborn Service," which claims to have made the interests of the dumb millions entirely its own.

The results of these determined efforts of Indian political associations to gain the ear of the British public were distinctly interesting and suggestive. So far as the elections went, the hopes of this country were rudely shattered. The electors generally went to the polls without troubling their heads about India and her champions, with the result that those whose candidature had been recommended by Indian leaders failed to get in, while those whose views on Indian problems had been condemned found themselves successful! From the point of view, however, of interesting the stolid Briton in the affairs of this country, the mission achieved some measure of success. It distributed a large number of pamphlets on the questions of the day, and secured a hearing from some thousands of people in England, who promised a sympathetic consideration of Indian problems in the future. As Pherozeshah observed, if the delegates had not set the Thames on fire, they had certainly kindled a spark in the

hearts of the British public which would blaze up into a flame in time to come, if Indian leaders persisted in their efforts and continued to send such missions year after year. This was somewhat optimistic for the ignorance and indifference which the average Englishman has betrayed generally, about the affairs of the great empire across the seas which chance and enterprise have placed in his hands, suggest that his education in these matters is not likely to be brought about by a few articles in the papers or a few speeches on the platform. In the words of an English statesman "it takes an enormous stimulus to move the English. They move onward like a glacier; a lifetime only makes a change. The inertia of matter is nothing to the inertia of the English mind."

While on this subject, we must note the great loss which India sustained about this time in the death of Professor Fawcett, the "member for India." Afflicted with a blindness caused by an accident, he was able nevertheless to render distinguished service to the land of his birth, and to that distant country, of whose interests he had constituted himself a champion. "Darkness enwrapped him, yet with steadfast work, He sought unfaltering, the highest light." His death at the comparatively early age of 51 was a great loss, and India mourned it in common with the rest of the empire. A public meeting was held in Bombay under the auspices of the Bombay Presidency Association on 2 September 1885, at which Europeans and Indians gathered in large numbers under the chairmanship of Lord Reay, to do honour to the memory of the illustrious statesman and economist. Moving tributes were paid by a number of speakers, and an influential committee was appointed to collect subscriptions for raising a memorial. In his speech on the occasion, Pherozeshah referred to the touching spectacle of the blind Professor, who had achieved for himself one of the most remarkable positions in the House of Commons, devoting himself as the champion of a country he had never seen, and the steadfast friend of a people with whom he had never come into personal contact, simply because that country needed a champion and those people wanted a friend to represent their interests. The speaker next turned to examine a criticism which had been made, that Mr. Fawcett's exertions on behalf of India had been barren of results. He remarked:

Those who say so seem to me to fail utterly in recognising the vast influence exercised by the moral forces of sympathy and example. It cannot but be that the people of India would feel a more generous loyalty and attraction towards a nation which can produce such sons and a civilization which can produce such culture. And it cannot but be also, that Professor Fawcett's own countrymen would be induced to give respectful attention to the views of a man so practical, so sober and so independent, and more and more learn to think with him that a foreign government must not only be pervaded by justice, but must also be tempered by sympathy.

Very true indeed, but unfortunately for India, few of her British champions have had the ear of their countrymen. It is not often that a Fawcett, a Bright, or a Bradlaugh has been found raising his powerful voice on behalf of his helpless fellow-subjects in other parts of the empire, and compelling his countrymen to listen. As for those earnest and noble-minded men, the Cottons and the Wedderburns, who have eaten the salt of the country and pleaded for justice to her helpless millions, their critics with lofty disdain have too often set them down as "disappointed civilians," or amiable cranks. Theirs would always have been a cry in the wilderness, had not the tremendous upheaval which the world has recently experienced brought about a new angle of vision among those responsible for the governance of India. Championship of India's interests is no longer condemned as unpatriotic, or regarded as a sort of mental aberration.

## CHAPTER X

### THE BIRTH OF THE CONGRESS 1885

THE activities of Indian reformers at this period found their most practical expression in the establishment of an organization, which for more than thirty years has laboured with a success, which its promoters could hardly have dreamt of, to rouse the political consciousness of the people, and to direct and foster the national movement. The Indian National Congress came into being towards the close of 1885, timidly and unobtrusively, but under circumstances which were full of promise for the future.

It was in the time of Lord Lytton that the conviction began to gather ground that some action was needed to counteract the growing forces of reaction, which were threatening the peaceful progress and development of the country. The Vernacular Press Act had greatly agitated the Indian mind; all over the country sober leaders of thought had since been exchanging views on the situation that had arisen, and laying plans for the future. There was a unanimity of feeling that India could no longer afford to stand at gaze, and that the time had arrived for the organization of a popular movement, which would arrest the reactionary tendencies increasingly manifested in the policy of Government and rouse the people to a sense of their wrongs.

With the arrival of Lord Ripon, a considerable improvement in the situation took place, and for some time nothing was done. It was not till 1883 that the first step was taken by Mr. Allan Octavian Hume—whose distinguished career in the Civil Service had just come to an end—in a circular letter, dated 1 March 1883, addressed to the graduates of the Calcutta University. It was a stirring appeal to the young men of Bengal to band themselves into a body of earnest workers for the national cause. If only fifty people came forward in the first instance, an organization could be started, which would develop into a national movement in course of time. It may

be mentioned in passing, that the lines suggested by Mr. Hume were more or less adopted by Gokhale nearly three decades later in his Servants of India Society. The appeal was coupled with a stern warning of the consequences of a lukewarm patriotism :

If you, the picked men, the most highly educated of the nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share in the administration of your own affairs, then we your friends are wrong and your adversaries right, then are Lord Ripon's noble aspirations for your good fruitless and visionary, then, at present at any rate, all hopes of progress are at an end, and India truly neither lacks nor deserves any better government than she enjoys.

The result of this stirring manifesto was the formation of the Indian National Union towards the end of 1884, which, in consultation with the Bombay Presidency Association, the Sarvajanik Sabha and other political organizations, arranged to hold an All-India Conference in December 1885, for the purpose of deciding upon a plan of political campaign, and effecting a closer co-operation between the leaders of thought in various parts of the country. Mr. Hume's original idea was to discuss social matters only, as he thought that, otherwise, the recognised public bodies which were doing political work in various centres would suffer in importance. But this view had to be abandoned at an early stage. It was hoped that the Conference would form the germ of an Indian Parliament, which, properly constituted and conducted, would be an effective reply to the assertion that India was unfit for any form of representative institutions. Previous to this, the three leading Associations of Calcutta had partly carried out the object in view, and had got together a number of people from different provinces for exchange of views, and for settling a common programme of action.

The honour of holding the Conference was accorded to Poona, and the Sarvajanik Sabha undertook to make all the necessary arrangements at its own cost, constituting itself for the occasion as a sort of Reception Committee. The place selected was the palace of

the Peshwas at the foot of the Parvati Hill. Before the preliminaries were settled, Mr. Hume, who was the life and soul of the movement, went and saw Lord Dufferin and placed before him his ideas of national regeneration. The Viceroy showed himself friendly and sympathetic, and it was at his instance that Mr. Hume, who had put social reform in the forefront of his programme, decided, in consultation with his friends, to give the proposed organization a political character. Lord Dufferin had pointed out the difficulty experienced by Government in ascertaining the real wants and wishes of the people, and had expressed his conviction that it would be very advantageous to have some responsible body through which the best Indian opinion could be gathered. An omniscient bureaucracy had, apparently, not then laid claim to an exclusive acquaintance with the wants and feelings of the masses, nor, it seems, had anyone thought of the mischievous consequences of subordinating social to political reform! All this was left to latter-day critics, after the Congress began to be troublesome and ceased to bask in the sunshine of official favour.

The policy of the Conference having been laid down, Mr. Hume proceeded to England to try and secure the movement against misrepresentation and calumny. He saw many prominent men, among them Lord Ripon, Lord Loreburn (then Mr. Robert Reid) and a large number of members of the House of Commons. He received assurances of sympathy from them, as well as from a section of the Liberal Press, which promised to publish messages sent through the agency of the Indian Telegraph Union, which had also been established at about the same time in order to counteract the mischievous activities of Reuter. When everything was satisfactorily settled, Hume returned to India in October and found Poona busy preparing for the great occasion. But it was destined that the historic capital of the Deccan should not have the honour of holding the first Congress in her midst. An outbreak of cholera occurred, and at the eleventh hour the venue had to be changed. Bombay at once came to the rescue, and promptly made the necessary arrangements. The trustees of the Goculdas Tejpal Boarding School at Gowalia Tank, of whom Telang was one, placed the spacious building at the disposal of the organizers. By the 27th December, everything was

ready for the reception of the 'representatives,' as they were called. The whole of the day, and part of the night too, was spent in mutual introductions and informal discussions. In the evening, a large number of prominent citizens came to welcome the representatives, and to express appreciation of the task to which they had set their hands.

On the fateful morning of 28 December 1885, seventy-two good men and true, representing a cross section of the most advanced political opinion, sat down to chalk out a programme of action. It was a happy circumstance that Bombay should have been ultimately chosen as the meeting place of the first Congress. It was in Bombay that the foundations of Local Self-Government had been laid, and it was appropriate that Bombay should also be the birthplace of the national movement. The honour of presiding on the occasion went to Mr. W. C. Bonnerji, one of the most eminent leaders Bengal has produced. At first, the idea was to ask the Governor of Bombay, Lord Reay, a statesman of liberal ideas, who belonged to the famous group of "Philosophical Radicals," to take the chair, but the matter being referred to Lord Dufferin, he deprecated the suggestion on the ground that it would be undesirable, from more points of view than one, for the head of the province actively to associate himself with what should essentially be a popular movement.

The gathering was small, being confined to the delegates mentioned, and a few visitors, among whom were Sir William Wedderburn, Mr. Justice Jardine, Professor Wordsworth, Colonel Phelps, Mr., afterwards Sir, Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, and Mr. Ranade, then a Judge of the Small Causes Court at Poona. But it was a representative gathering, which included leaders of thought in all parts of the country. In the words of the President, "never had so important and comprehensive an assemblage occurred within historical times on the soil of India." Some there were, advanced in years, like the Grand Old Man of India; others like Bonnerji, Telang, Subramaniya Iyer, Wacha and Pherozeshah, still young and enthusiastic, and full of hopes for the future. All alike were greatly in earnest and fired with a noble purpose. Year after year, these early stalwarts stood on the Congress platform, unmindful of ridicule and obloquy, and with their faith unimpaired in the justice of their cause, and in its

ultimate triumph. Their faith was large in Time, and many of them lived to see the dawn of a brighter day.

The proceedings commenced with the election of the President, moved by Mr. Hume and seconded and supported by Messrs. Subramania Iyer and Telang. Mr. Bonnerji in acknowledging the honour done to him, made a short speech—the portentous orations of later days were then unknown—in which he explained the objects of the movement. Referring to the authority of those who had gathered there to speak on behalf of their countrymen, he said he did not claim that they were representatives of the people in the same sense in which the members of the House of Commons were representatives of the constituencies, “but if community of sentiments, community of feelings and community of wants enabled anyone to speak on behalf of others, then assuredly they might justly claim to be the representatives of the people of India.” At the end of his speech, Mr. Bonnerji affirmed the loyalty of the Congress to the British connection. Nine resolutions were moved which, among other things, demanded a Royal Commission of inquiry into the working of the Indian administration, the abolition of the India Council, the expansion of the Legislative Councils, the curtailment of military expenditure and the institution of simultaneous examinations for the Civil Service. Most of these resolutions have become hardy annuals, and need not be noticed here, but it is interesting to note that, in the resolution dealing with the expansion of the Legislative Councils, the suggestion was made “that a Standing Committee of the House of Commons should be constituted to receive and consider any formal protests that may be recorded by majorities of such Councils against the exercise by the Executive of the power, which would be vested in it, of overruling the decisions of such majorities.”

Pherozeshah's share in the proceedings of this historic Congress was not inconsiderable. He was entrusted with the seconding of the first proposition, moved by Mr. G. Subramania Iyer, which approved of the promised committee of inquiry into the working of the Indian administration. Speaking on the resolution, Pherozeshah contended that the body charged with the inquiry should be so constituted that it could be in a position to pursue its investigations in this country

itself, taking evidence here, and that Indians should be represented on it. He was of opinion that if the inquiry was not granted in the manner pointed out, it would be almost better to have no inquiry at all. Parliamentary Committees and Royal Commissions were not to be had at short intervals, and it would be disastrous to have a body composed mainly of Englishmen sitting in judgment upon themselves. The conclusions at which such a body would arrive would be superficially plausible, but essentially unsound. They would be accepted as guiding principles for at least another twenty years, and the mischief thus ensuing would be incalculable. These observations seem to have suggested the amendment, which was moved by Mr. Dayaram Jethmal, a representative of Sind, which recommended that the inquiry should be entrusted to a Royal Commission on which the people of India should be represented, and which should take evidence both in England and in India. The amendment was accepted by Pherozeshah, and after an interesting discussion, in which Messrs. Hume, Wacha, Telang, Malabari and Dadabhai Naoroji took part, it was carried unanimously.

Another proposal with which Pherozeshah identified himself was in connection with the annexation of Upper Burma. He asked for leave to introduce the subject, as it did not find a place on the agenda. He said he did not wish to go into the question of the annexation which he considered unwise, unjust and immoral. He only desired to look at the matter from the Indian point of view, and viewing it so, he was of opinion that Burma should be made a Crown Colony, as otherwise, he was afraid she would prove a drag on Indian progress. Lord Dufferin had said that the weakness of the North-West Frontier disabled him from giving as much attention as he liked to home affairs, and Pherozeshah did not want that the North-East Frontier should be added to the list of the Viceroy's distractions. With Ceylon in the South, and Burma in the North-East as Crown Colonies, the speaker thought they could ask with greater strength and reason for more liberal institutions in India than she possessed. These remarks were greeted with so much applause that the President said that he would take that as equivalent to a grant of leave to introduce the motion. Pherozeshah accordingly moved:

That this Congress deprecates the annexation of Upper Burma, and considers that if the Government unfortunately decide on annexation, the entire country of Burma should be separated from the Indian Viceroyalty, and constituted a Crown Colony, as distinct in all matters from the government of this country as Ceylon.

After some discussion, the proposition was carried. At the present moment, while Indian politicians are crying aloud that Burma should be regarded as an integral part of India, the bureaucracy is jealously seeking to guard the province from contamination with the currents of Indian political life. Such are the changes which the whirligig of Time brings about.

The resolution on Burma practically finished the business of the session. At the close, resounding cheers were given for the Queen-Empress and for Mr. Hume, to whose energy, driving force and burning love for the land in which he had spent the best years of his life, were due in a great measure the inception and success of the first National Congress of the people of India. Small as it was in numbers, it might be regarded as voicing the opinions of a growing number of politically minded Indians. The resolutions which were carried at its session were generally adopted at meetings held all over the country.

The proceedings of the Congress evoked widespread interest, and were noticed at some length in *The Times*, whose Bombay correspondent wrote a sympathetic account of the movement. Commenting upon it, the 'Thunderer' could not resist the temptation of indulging in sentiments which are the usual stock-in-trade of the die-hard. After referring to the manner in which Bombay had substantiated her claim to be the first city in India by being the gathering place of the first national assembly, it went on to give a qualified approval to some of the resolutions, and an unqualified disapproval to others. After detailing the latter, the journal remarked:

The first question which this series of resolutions will suggest is whether India is ripe for the transformation which they involve.

If this can be answered in the affirmative, the days of English rule are numbered. If India can govern itself, our stay in the country is no longer called for. All we have to do is to preside over the construction of the new system and then leave it to work. The lawyers and schoolmasters and newspaper editors will step into the vacant place and will conduct affairs with no help from us. Those who know India best will be the first to recognize the absurd impracticability of such a change. The educated classes may find fault with their exclusion from full political rights. Political privileges they can obtain in the degree in which they prove themselves deserving of them. But it was by force that India was won, and it is by force that India must be governed, in whatever hands the government of the country may be vested. If we were to withdraw, it would be in favour not of the most fluent tongue, or of the most ready pen, but the strongest arm and the sharpest sword.

The Congress has survived all the onslaughts on it since its modest beginnings in 1885. It has aroused the political consciousness of the people to a degree that could never have been anticipated by the 'founding fathers' of the movement. Today, unhappily, many of those who assisted at its birth and gave it of their best for nearly a generation have had to withdraw from its councils, leaving the field largely to politicians determined to brook no obstacles or delay. Is it too much to hope that the differences within its ranks may some day be bridged and the Congress emerge once again as an organization speaking for the vast majority of educated and patriotic Indians? Or, is the steady growth of Parliamentary institutions going to spell the gradual fading away of a body brought into existence as an unofficial Parliament of the people and no longer needed under a system of responsible government? Whatever may happen, the Indian National Congress will live in our history as the most powerful instrument of national regeneration this country has ever known.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MUNICIPAL ACT OF 1888 1887-1888

IN an earlier part of this work, the violent controversy which raged in the seventies over the question of reforms in the municipal administration of Bombay, has been dealt with at some length. We have seen how courageously Pherozeshah stood up in defence of a régime discredited on almost all hands, and how sagaciously he pointed out the defects in the system and the right remedy for them. Ridiculed and abused, as most men who are ahead of their times are, he had ultimately the satisfaction of seeing the broad lines of the constitution he had chalked out adopted in the Municipal Act of 1872. Under that constitution worked by some of the best minds in the City, its administration had made remarkable progress in every direction. With the lapse of time, however, the necessity for a more uniform and progressive enactment was felt, and ever since the publication of Lord Ripon's memorable resolution on local self-government, the Corporation had made various representations to Government from time to time, in the drawing up of which Pherozeshah had taken a leading part.

After various schemes had been discussed and rejected, including a draft Bill providing for a system of executive committees, which was referred to the Corporation for criticism, and which that body condemned as a reversion to an unsound principle, Government introduced the long-looked for Bill in the Legislative Council on 16 July 1887. It was the result of the joint labours of Mr. Naylor, the Legal Remembrancer, and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Charles Ollivant, the Municipal Commissioner, who, during his temporary absence in England in 1883, had been deputed by the Corporation to study the systems of municipal government in existence in Great Britain. In the Council, the only Indian of outstanding merit, before the Bill was introduced, was Mr. Telang, and to strengthen the popular element on that body, and to secure the requisite knowledge and

experience of civic affairs, the Government of Lord Reay had the wisdom to appoint Pherozeshah as an "additional" member. The appointment was received on all sides with cordial approval. *The Bombay Gazette* spoke of it as "a very appropriate recognition of ability shown in many fields," and particularly referred to Pherozeshah's moderation and independence. *The Indian Spectator*, conducted by the late B. M. Malabari, a journalist and social reformer of considerable note, was equally appreciative. "In Mr. P. M. Mehta, the Bombay Government secures for its Legislative Council a worthy man. His talents, breadth of views, and public spirit make him one of the very best native members the Bombay Council has had."

The Bill in the shape in which it was introduced was in many respects of a retrograde character. It sought to enlarge the authority of the Commissioner at the expense of the Corporation, and it reserved to Government powers of initiative and interference in various matters, which ought rightly to fall within the province of a local body. Strangely enough, the men responsible for this illiberal measure were not reactionaries in any sense. At the head of the administration was a Governor who had come with the reputation of a man of wide culture and sympathies. The official sponsor of the Bill, Mr. Naylor, was a just and fair-minded civilian, open to conviction, and without the prejudices of his caste. And yet, the measure, evolved after years of consideration and criticism, lacked the essentials of a satisfactory scheme of local self-government. The fact was that the original framework was that of Mr. Ollivant, who could not entirely divest himself of the point of view of the class to which he belonged, and in the Bill submitted to the Council, the principal features of his scheme had been retained. Mr. Naylor claimed for the Bill, that it was designed "to secure to the citizens of Bombay the greatest possible efficiency in municipal service with the most complete possible control over expenditure." Mr. Telang, on the other hand, pronounced it to be "a retrograde measure, so retrograde, indeed, that if on voting I had to make my choice merely between this Bill and the old law, I should unhesitatingly give my voice in favour of the law as it at present exists, with all its anomalies, its laxities of phraseology and its conflicts of jurisdiction."

Such was the character of the Bill when it was referred to a Select

Committee, consisting of Sir Maxwell Melville, a member of the Executive Council and once a distinguished Judge of the High Court, the Advocate-General, Mr. Macpherson, and Messrs. Telang, Pherozeshah and Kazi Shahabudin. The Committee conducted its deliberations on the cool heights of Mahableshwar, where the official mind is said to derive a strength and elasticity which are supposed to be impossible in the burning plains. Evidently, Pherozeshah was not in a hurry to enjoy the privilege of deliberating on affairs of state on a hill-top, for late in October we find a telegram from the Secretary to the Legislative Council, informing him that the meetings of the Committee depended entirely on his arrival. When he went, he found that in the absence of Mr. Telang, the brunt of the fighting was to be borne by him. His official colleagues were fair-minded men, on the whole, but they had their prejudices and prepossessions, and their acquaintance with the practical working of the Municipal Act was slight. Their conversion to the popular view on many points of importance was brought about by the exercise of much tact, patience and ability on the part of Pherozeshah. He was greatly assisted by the large measure of criticism to which the Bill was subjected in public, and in particular, by a very elaborate exposition of its views which the Corporation had forwarded to Government.

Perhaps, the most important particular in which the measure was improved was that whereby the municipal government of the city was vested in the Corporation, subject to express provisions in the Act. The original clause had set up the Commissioner as the authority charged with carrying out the provisions of the statute, and had sought to place him in a position in which he would have dominated the conduct of affairs and constituted himself the principal authority in matters of local self-government. Mr. Telang had objected to the clause on the first reading and had rightly characterized it as the keynote of the Bill. Its alteration, therefore, was a matter of importance, and purged the measure of its most objectionable feature.

To the part played by Pherozeshah in bringing about this and other modifications, his life-long friend and colleague, Dinshaw Wacha, has borne a testimony which will not be regarded as exaggerated:

His patient, persevering and convincing advocacy of the amendments after amendments which he proposed were principally, nay, almost wholly, instrumental in casting the Bill in an entirely different shape from that in which it had been originally moulded by Mr. Naylor. Of this colossal labour, this expenditure of time and mental energy of a very high order, the public have little or no knowledge. He had the largest share of all his other colleagues in modifying each and all of the original sections.

The result of the Select Committee's deliberations was to liberalize the Bill in many important particulars. Several features of it were still open to objection, and the Corporation took up a strong position with regard to them. In the course of a fresh representation it made on the subject, it observed :

The Corporation are anxious that their view of the case should not be ignored; either they are, or they are not, to be the governing body of this city. If they are to be the governing body, they should be entrusted with full powers to carry out what they believe to be right and best; if they are not to be the governing body, there is then no apparent necessity for their existence.

This bold statement of the case was worthy of the Corporation of those days, consisting as it did of representatives of the people noted for their ability and strength of character, and of a strong and independent body of Europeans who served the city with singular zeal and devotion. When the second reading of the Bill was taken up on 7 March 1888, the ground was fought inch by inch, and most of the modifications which the Select Committee had thrown out were adopted. Mr. Naylor led off with an utterance indicative of the conciliatory attitude of himself and his official colleagues. He was followed by Pherozeshah in a speech which students of municipal politics might read with profit even at the present day. He traced the history of the municipal government in the city, in order to show that the Bill as originally introduced was a retrograde measure and was calculated to put back the hands of the clock. The Select Committee had altered it a great deal, but there still remained several

objectionable features which would have to be strenuously resisted in the Council. For instance, there was a section, which proposed to give very wide powers to the Commissioner in cases of emergency. There was another provision for authorizing the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner, to which Pherozeshah was strongly opposed as leading to divided responsibility. Barring these and a few other obnoxious clauses, he readily recognised that the Bill constituted a substantial measure of advance along the road to local self-government.

It is unnecessary to do more than dip into the pages which record the long and often interesting discussions which took place in the Council when the Bill was considered section by section. To those interested in the subject, a study of Dinshaw Wacha's graphic history of municipal institutions in Bombay may be confidently recommended. It gives the salient points of the long-drawn debates in the Council, and vividly portrays the parts played by individual members. For our purpose, it is enough to say that many of the objectionable features, which still clung to the Bill when it emerged from the Select Committee, were removed by the strenuous efforts of Pherozeshah and Telang, ably backed by Sir Frank Forbes Adam, one of the most liberal-minded merchant princes of the day.

The result was due in part also to the very fair attitude which was adopted by Lord Reay, a genuine lover of freedom, and by the official spokesmen who piloted the Bill through the Council. We have, in consequence, in the Act of 1888, a close approximation to the ideal of municipal government cherished by Telang, namely, "a strong executive responsible to the Corporation, and an enlightened Corporation watchful over its executive." Those who assisted in bringing about the desired consummation might well have been proud of their handiwork. It was not, of course, free from defects, but it was as perfect as the conflicting forces of conservatism on the one hand and radicalism on the other could make it. As Sir Raymond, then Mr. West, observed, there were very few occasions on which a Bill of such complexity and involving the balancing of so many principles, which at the first seemed more or less opposed, had been passed through a Legislative Council with such general approval of its proposals. The man whose opinion on the subject

most counted was well pleased with it. On the third reading of the Bill, Pherozeshah characterized it as an eminently workable and practicable measure. It was drawn on sound principles—sound in theory and tested by long experience. It had carefully steered clear of two pitfalls. On the one hand, it had avoided the blunder of making the Commissioner anything more than the executive officer of the supreme administrative body, which was the Corporation. On the other, it had resisted the temptation of abolishing the Commissioner in favour of executive committees or councils, or of changing the mode of his appointment.

Lord Reay wound up the proceedings with a lucid exposition of the fundamental principles underlying the proposed legislation. Bombay owes much to this courageous statesman, who laboured during five strenuous years to give her a pure and progressive administration. While we recall with gratitude the part played by her sons in securing for her a genuine measure of self-government, let us not forget that the man who presided over her fortunes at an important juncture was imbued with liberal principles, which he was anxious to translate into practice. He set the tone to the Council, and the debates throughout maintained a high level of ability, moderation and good sense. His summary of the main features of the Bill was admirable in its lucidity:

Government has mainly had in view to give through this Bill to the ratepayers the greatest security against extravagance and a wasteful administration. Representatives of the city are responsible for the good government of the city. A number of duties are imposed on them which it would be impossible for them in their corporate capacity to fulfil in detail. They are obviously a deliberative assembly, and the result of their deliberations will naturally assume the shape of bye-laws, resolutions or instructions, the execution of which must be left to another authority. Their constitution prohibits the performance of administrative duties which no representative assembly in any other country has ever dreamt of undertaking. They, like all other legislative assemblies, influence, control and direct the administration by giving or withholding the funds for certain purposes, but they are not and

cannot be administrative bodies. The same Act of the Legislature which creates them must, therefore, create other authorities for the purpose of carrying out the duties which the legislative and superintending body cannot execute.

Lord Reay did not fail to pay a tribute to those who had worked with him in a spirit of wholehearted co-operation. He gave due praise to Sir Charles Ollivant for the labour and thought he had devoted to the drafting of the Bill, and to Naylor, Latham and Macpherson, who had throughout been most helpful in piloting it through the Council. He spoke appreciatively of Telang's services, and last, but not least, he bore generous testimony to the value of Pherozeshah's guidance and co-operation :

I appointed the Honourable Mr. Mehta on this Council, so that we might have the benefit of his intimate knowledge of municipal affairs in the Select Committee in our debates. The honourable member has taken a considerable share in facilitating the passage and improvements of this Bill which, I believe, meets his views, which, I take it, are representative of those of the community, though, I may be permitted to add, his views were characterized by that independence of judgment which marks a representative as distinct from a delegate.

With this graceful compliment, we may bring to an end this brief narrative of a legislative measure which has given Bombay the inestimable boon of a sound and progressive municipal administration, which has been regarded as a model for the whole country. It is still a long way behind Western municipalities, both as regards its administrative achievements and its conception of the functions of a civic corporation. But for all that, the Act of 1888 has given the citizens of Bombay a charter of local self-government, which has proved the most successful, as it has been the first experiment of its kind in India. It has stood the test of time, and, subject to a few modifications which experience has rendered necessary, has been found to be an eminently sound and workable measure, which has provided an excellent training ground for the development of

administrative capacity. There have been occasions on which a masterful Commissioner has undermined the independence of the Corporation, there have been times when the debates have sunk to an unpleasantly low level. But the most perfect human institutions must depend for their success on the men who work them, and such lapses and shortcomings must be viewed in their proper perspective. In his final remarks on the Bill, Pherozeshah observed that the prospect of its success would not simply be in its own excellence; it would depend in a great measure on its being worked in that combined spirit of enlightened zeal and public spirit, and of sound practical commonsense, which had distinguished the conduct of municipal affairs in the past. He was confident that it would be worked in that spirit, and that it would "add fresh laurels to the municipal fame of this city." The prediction has been amply fulfilled. By the manner in which she has administered her affairs, Bombay has added to her reputation for political sobriety and capacity. This has been due in a considerable measure to the life-long labours of Pherozeshah himself. As the Duke of Connaught who was associated with him when the Act of 1888 was being moulded in the Legislative Council, observed long after, the municipal constitution of Bombay "bears the indelible mark of genius impressed upon it by the late Sir Pherozeshah Mehta," whom he was proud to remember as a friend. For more than a generation, his personality dominated the stage. When he quitted it, he left a void, which may never be filled. But his work endures, and the spirit which he has infused in the administration of local affairs will continue, let us hope, to inspire succeeding generations, and help to maintain the proud position which the Bombay Corporation has so long occupied among the self-governing institutions in the country.

## CHAPTER XII

### PROFESSIONAL SUCCESSES—A JOURNALISTIC VENTURE—THE CRAWFORD INQUIRY— EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

1887–1889

THE qualities which placed Pherozeshah in the forefront of Indian politicians also brought him to the front rank in his profession. Courage, independence and skill in argument are naturally as much prized by parties to a litigation as by the general public. The resourceful debater was equally sought after in courts of law as in the council chamber or on the platform. All over Gujarat and Kathiawar his services were in continual request. His impressive presence, polished manners and elegant attire—not to forget the velvet collar which adorned his coat!—lent distinction to his personality, and marked him out from his contemporaries. Wherever he was wanted, he went in a sort of state, with a travelling paraphernalia which was something to wonder at, and which often included a barber! His extremely fastidious habits, which had to be scrupulously respected, added to the awe in which he was held by his clients and by the public generally. The combined battery of these forces bore down alike on the presiding judge and the opposing counsel and witnesses. Add to all these the attributes of a skilful advocacy, and it is not surprising that his forensic triumphs were as great as any he achieved in the sphere of public life.

In 1887, we find Pherozeshah engaged in two cases which attracted considerable attention at the time. One was what was known as the Municipal Octroi case, in which a respected citizen of Broach, Mr. Edulji Muncherji, was charged with breach of trust. Messrs. Jardine and Pherozeshah defended the accused, and after a lengthy hearing secured his acquittal. The verdict aroused considerable enthusiasm, and the more energetic among the good folks of Broach wanted to drag the carriage of the victorious counsel from the court to the bungalow where they were staying. The latter having declined

the honour, their admirers had to content themselves with giving the heroes a hearty send-off. The entire route was decorated with crude ornamentations of all sorts, and the inevitable brass band was in evidence at half a dozen points on the way. At the station, flowers were presented and speeches were made, to the accompaniment of riotous music. As the Broach correspondent of a Bombay journal remarked, "the demonstration was touching in its simplicity, quite natural in some of its very oddities; and as a sincere expression of joy and admiration, it was calculated at once to please and amuse those in whose honour it was made."

Another *cause celebre* in which Pherozeshah was engaged, and which added considerably to his reputation was the Cambay Inquiry which took place in the early part of 1887. In this trial, Mr. Wilson, the Collector of Kaira, stood charged with having made indecent overtures to a daughter of the Diwan of Cambay. The high position of the parties and the nature of the offence invested the inquiry with a great deal of importance, and public interest was excited in an unusual degree. The Government of Lord Reay, distinguished for the courage with which it dealt with moral lapses on the part of its servants, however highly-placed or influential, appointed a commission of inquiry consisting of two responsible officials. Mr. Inverarity, one of the greatest advocates who have ever practised in Indian courts, was engaged on behalf of the accused, and Pherozeshah appeared for the complainant. The inquiry was held at Ahmedabad. In the absence of suitable accommodation, Pherozeshah and the attorney instructing him had to put up at the refreshment rooms at the railway station. After a lengthy hearing, Mr. Wilson was found guilty of the charge laid against him, and this decision of the Commissioners was endorsed by the Government of Lord Reay after a careful consideration of the evidence in the case. Mr. Wilson appealed to the Secretary of State, tendering his resignation from the Service at the same time, and had the satisfaction of having his character duly white-washed.

As for Pherozeshah's conduct of the case, we have the testimony of a distinguished American, Mr. James Gordon Bennett, who was touring the world, and happened to be at Ahmedabad at the time of the inquiry. In an interesting reminiscence of that famous

sportsman and proprietor of the *New York Herald*, the Calcutta journalist who contributes racy paragraphs on Bombay topics to the columns of the *Capital*, gives us a few glimpses of the trial. He was present throughout as the special reporter of *The Times of India*, and we shall give the account in his own words:

On the third or fourth day of the trial, a party of Americans from Bombay alighted at the Ahmedabad station to do the sights of that ancient city of *durwazas*, temples and mosques. They were all at dinner that evening in the ordinary, and listened attentively to the prattle about the day's proceedings in court in which the lawyers and journalists indulged. The next morning one of them, who was evidently the leader, came to me and asked if it would be permissible for a stranger to attend the court to listen to the evidence. If so, he would prolong his stay in Ahmedabad, instead of proceeding at once to Rajputana to visit Udaipur and Jodhpore. I told him that he could come with me if he liked, and I would get him a chair at the reporters' table, there being little or no accommodation for the public. He was grateful and asked me to liquor. I cottoned, and we went off together. He was lucky in his day, for it was completely taken up with the cross-examination by Mr. Mehta of the chief witness for the defence. The great Parsee barrister never in all his career did anything more splendid. The forensic triumph staggered my companion, who told me afterwards that Mr. Chauncey Depew could not have bettered it.

It was at lunch that the American told the journalist who he was—none other than James Gordon Bennett. He said he was doing the grand tour of India and expected many interesting experiences, but he doubted that any would beat "the wonderful eye-opener by the Parsee lawyer, who had twisted a wily witness into a corkscrew." Mr. Bennett did not know, of course, that the skilful advocate whom he was admiring was an altogether remarkable man, who could have made his mark in any country in almost any walk of life.

Pherozeshah was in the front rank of the profession at this period. When Justice Nanabhai Haridas died in 1889, his name was freely mentioned in connection with the vacancy, along with the names of

Tyabji, Telang and Ranade. Ultimately, Telang was appointed, and a brilliant and capable leader was lost to the national cause. Not for the first time, were the thin ranks of our public men reduced in such fashion, nor for the last. One after another, Tyabji, Ranade and Chandavarkar mounted the Bench, and disappeared from active public life. Almost alone among his early associates, Pherozeshah kept himself free to the last to fight for the cause he had made his own. Some time after Mr. Telang's elevation to the Bench, Lord Reay told Mr. H. A. Wadya that if the appointment had for any reason been vetoed by the Secretary of State, he would have offered it to Pherozeshah, but he doubted whether the latter would have accepted it. Our political history would certainly have been differently written if the contingency contemplated by Lord Reay had arisen, and the offer by some chance had been accepted.

## II

Ever since the Ilbert Bill agitation quickened political life in the country, the Bombay leaders, and particularly the brilliant triumvirate—Tyabji, Telang and Pherozeshah—were carrying on a ceaseless campaign for reforms in every branch of the administration. From various platforms and through diverse organizations, they laboured to promote the public good; but they were handicapped by the want of a newspaper which would support their policy, and inculcate from day to day the principles for which they stood. *The Times of India* was frankly anti-Indian in most of its views, and though the *Bombay Gazette* was sympathetic in its general attitude towards Indian aspirations, it could not be regarded as expressing the popular point of view. Calcutta, Madras and even places of lesser importance, boasted of one or two national organs, but 'the first city in India' had apparently not the public spirit and enthusiasm to found and maintain an English daily conducted from the Indian standpoint.

It was with a view to wiping out this reproach and supplying a real want, that Pherozeshah in partnership with a well-known journalist, Mr. Jehangir Murzban, undertook in 1888 to resuscitate the *Advocate of India*, which was languishing at the time. It was

then under the control of Dr. Blaney, that eminent citizen, whose manifold services to Bombay were afterwards rewarded by a grateful people with a statue erected in his life-time. The necessary arrangements were made, and the proprietorship of the paper changed hands. In announcing that fact, the new management told the public what its policy was going to be in an article which is believed to have been written by Pherozeshah. After stating that those who had the direction of the paper in their hands had no intention of making rash promises of any sort, beyond that they would endeavour to discuss all public questions in a way which would promote the best interests of the country, the article went on to say :

There is, therefore, room in this Presidency for an English daily which would present Indian phenomena and facts, and approach and treat all Indian questions from an Indian point of view. We trust that this can be done with moderation as well as independence. We hope to steer clear of two pitfalls, into one or other of which people in this country are apt to tumble in forming their judgements of men and events. We shall no more presume that all Englishmen, official or non-official, are malignant tyrants till they prove themselves the contrary, than we shall countenance the presumption that all natives, and especially educated natives, are disloyal, seditious and generally ill-conditioned, till they establish their innocence. We steadily refuse to believe that Englishmen have a monopoly of one moiety of the sins in the decalogue, and the natives of this country of the other.

The rejuvenated *Advocate of India* started off well owing to the exertions of Pherozeshah, who got a band of able writers to contribute to its columns. Among its first helpers in places outside Bombay were Messrs. N. Gupta, G. Subramania Iyer, Harchandrai Vishindas and Padshah, names little heard then, but not unknown to fame in journalistic and political circles in later years. Dinshaw Wacha, too, made some notable contributions, particularly in reference to the Hume-Colvin controversy over the Congress. The paper looked up, and did useful service to the popular cause. But Pherozeshah's connection with it was short-lived. He had differences

with his partner, and within a year, his association in the venture came to an end. Years afterwards, when the *Advocate* had passed into the hands of Mr. Gordon, the present proprietor, Pherozeshah helped the paper in its difficulties. The ever-ready pen of Wacha was also freely employed in its service. This assistance was publicly acknowledged by Gordon on more than one occasion. But when, later on, a change came over the tone and policy of the paper, it did not hesitate to attack the very man whom it once used to hold up for admiration, and to whom it owed not a little of the success with which it tided over a period of difficulty.

## III

Among the notable events of Lord Reay's administration was the Crawford inquiry, which took place in 1889. That gifted official, after his brilliant but extravagant administration of Bombay's municipal affairs, had filled with credit a number of important positions, and was at the time of his tragic downfall holding the high post of Commissioner of a Division. During his tenure of that office unexampled bribery and corruption prevailed, which amounted to a public scandal. The position and influence of the man, and the prestige of the Service to which he belonged, protected him, however, for a long time, and would have secured him practical immunity from the consequences of his misconduct so long as he remained at his post, were it not that the ruler of the province was a man of the strength of character of Lord Reay. In the teeth of considerable opposition, he decided to investigate the charges which were freely flung about in public, and appointed a commission of inquiry.

It was a duty which most other men would have shrunk from. The *furore* that was created, the difficulties that were encountered in obtaining proper evidence, the special measures that had to be adopted for the protection of witnesses and the controversies that were roused, all these are matters of history which do not concern us for the moment. Sufficient for our purpose to note that Mr. Crawford was adjudged not guilty of the specific charges levelled against him, but the Commission held that grave irregularities had been

committed during his regime and he had to resign from the Service. Thereupon a furious campaign of vilification and misrepresentation was carried on against Lord Reay's government in the organs of the bureaucracy with a view to discredit the inquiry. The prestige of the "Heaven-born Service" had suffered a damaging blow, and there was such a flutter in the official dove-cotes as never was seen.

This was the position of affairs when a confidential note written upon the inquiry by Mr. Ommaney, the Inspector-General of Police, who was in charge of the case, saw the light of day in the blue-book upon the subject. In the 78th para of the memorandum, the following passage occurred :

Before concluding this narrative of the inquiry, I think it will be as well to say a few words in further explanation of the opposition that I have referred to in various places. It must in the first place be clearly understood that the whole of the Parsi community, which includes all the people who know most about Mr. Crawford's financial arrangements were in the opposition. From Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy down to Merwanji Pleader and the proprietors of *The Deccan Herald*, every Parsi was a passive or active obstructionist.

The excitement into which the Parsi community was thrown by this libellous statement may easily be imagined. There were angry protests from all sides, and indignant correspondents wrote long letters to the papers. The incident was cleverly manipulated by those who were up in arms against Lord Reay's Government on the score of the inquiry, and the movement for holding a public meeting of the community in Bombay to protest against the Inspector-General's reckless aspersions found unexpected supporters in the ranks of Englishmen in the City. The affair was to be artfully represented as a denunciation of Lord Reay's action, and was to be utilized for outside consumption.

The political sagacity of Pherozeshah saw through the manœuvre. He realized that the leaders of the movement for a public meeting were playing into the hands of those large and powerful sections, here as well as in England, to whom the Crawford inquiry had given

dire offence. To defeat the manœuvre, Pherozeshah called a meeting of a few influential Parsis to consider what steps should be taken by the community with reference to the remarks in Mr. Ommaney's report. His opinion was that all that was needed was a strong but dignified representation to Lord Reay. This view of the matter prevailed, and Sir Dinshaw Petit was asked to address His Excellency. The representation which the latter made was drafted by Pherozeshah, and was an effective remonstrance, which lost nothing of its force by being short and dignified. A prompt reply was sent, exonerating the community from the charges levelled against it in Mr. Ommaney's memorandum, and this *amende honorable* was regarded by many leading Parsis as affording sufficient satisfaction.

The excitement amongst the mass of the community did not subside, however, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Kabraji, the veteran journalist, Mr. Nanabhai Chichgar, and Mr. (now Sir) M. M. Bhowmugree, and to the clever wire-pulling of the Anglo-Indian Press in Bombay. The clamour for a public meeting to wipe out the stain on Parsi honour continued. Pherozeshah, Mr. Sorabji Bengalee, who was actively associated with him in the action they had taken, and others were freely abused in some of the Parsi papers, notably the *Rast-Goftar*. Thereupon, Pherozeshah wrote a letter to the *Advocate of India* in which he explained at some length his view of the matter. He commenced by expressing his hearty concurrence with the statement contained in Sir Dinshaw Petit's letter to the Governor—which was not surprising in view of the fact that he himself had drafted it!—that the imputation of offering passive or active obstruction to the inquiry was not only unfounded and undeserved, but that it misrepresented the attitude of the community towards the inquiry, as nothing was better known than that the Parsi community generally was foremost in according the fullest and most emphatic approval to the action of Government throughout the whole of the inquiry, and in cordially appreciating the firmness and high sense of duty which were manifest in undertaking and prosecuting so arduous and difficult a task. That being the case, the only question was what was the best way of repudiating the attack made by Mr. Ommaney,—of whose handling of the case, it may be said in passing, Pherozeshah had the chivalry and fairness to

speak in terms of appreciation—without giving a handle to those who wished to turn the incident to account, by representing that the Parsi community had also turned against the Government. Pherozeshah thought that a public meeting was certainly not a wise move. Those who were in favour of it had urged that every care would be taken in making clear the object of the meeting. But, observed Pherozeshah with much shrewdness, their elaborate speeches and explanations would scarcely be read except by themselves, and the whole thing would be misrepresented, as had been done over and over again in the course of the inquiry with regard to other matters. He concluded by declaring that he had no positive objection to the holding of a public meeting, apart from the above considerations, except that he thought it was like using a ton-hammer to crack a nut.

This lucid and trenchant criticism, though widely read and commented upon, did not prevent the meeting from being held. The incident was not of any special importance in itself, but it illustrates the shrewdness of Pherozeshah's judgment and the almost unerring instinct with which he divined the motive and purpose of any political move.

## IV

In July 1889, Pherozeshah was elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts in the Bombay University. His rise to a position of influence in the University was somewhat rapid. Though his connection with it dated back to the year 1868, when he was appointed a Fellow on the recommendation of Sir Alexander Grant, for some years he took no very active interest in the deliberations of the Senate. It was not till 1886, when he had attained eminence in other walks of life, that he began to play a leading part in the affairs of the University. About that time, he joined in the discussion of various matters of importance. One of them related to the introduction of French as a second language in the curriculum of the University. Pherozeshah strongly supported the proposal, which had been moved by Mr. Justice Jardine, and urged that the excellence of English literature was no reason why other modern languages should not be admitted. Students ought to be free to gather their knowledge from all sources.

This view commended itself to a majority of the Senate, and the proposition was carried in spite of considerable opposition based on ancient prejudices. Another question on which Pherozeshah addressed the Senate was when the standard of admission to the Medical College was under consideration. The proposal was to raise it from the Matriculation to the Previous examination. Pherozeshah, chivalrous as he was, moved that the standard should be raised only in the case of male students, so as not to hamper female education. The amendment was defeated, perhaps because, as a journal remarked, it was too obviously partial to the fair sex to commend itself to the meeting.

Somewhat more exciting was a discussion which took place early in the same year on a recommendation of the Syndicate to the Senate that a special grace be passed in favour of Mr. Jehangir Kabraji—a son of the well-known editor of the *Rass-Goftar*—for admission to the M.A. examination. This innocent little proposition provoked a considerable amount of heat and bitterness. The veteran journalist's political views were unpopular, and a systematic campaign had been carried on in the Press against the passing of the 'grace' by a number of young graduates. Mr. Wordsworth, Principal of the Elphinstone College, moved the adoption of the Syndicate's recommendation. Pherozeshah seconded the proposition, and bluntly told the Senate that the discussion would not have taken place, but for the fact that young Kabraji was the son of his father. This remark provoked much resentment, which found its way into the newspapers also. After a heated debate, the proposition was carried by a narrow majority. Mr. Wordsworth and Pherozeshah were hissed and given an uncomfortably hot reception by the crowd of students gathered inside the Hall. Their courageous advocacy brought them considerable unpopularity for a time.

Pherozeshah's interest in the cause of education was manifested in various other ways. He became one of the promoters of the Graduates' Association which was started in Bombay in April 1886. A meeting was called for the purpose of inaugurating it in the rooms of the Presidency Association. Mr. Vaman Modak, an educationist, who was among the first alumni of the University, was called to the chair. On the proposal of Pherozeshah, seconded by Mr. Chanda-varkar, the Association was formed, and Mr. Ranade was appointed

its first President. For the first few years, the Association showed considerable activity. It memorialized the University and the Government on all manner of educational questions, and did much useful work. Among other things, it obtained from the University the right of representation for graduates on the Senate. Pherozeshah's connection with it continued to the end. Two years after it was started, he was appointed President, and enjoyed that position for a number of years. His presidential address delivered at the seventh annual meeting, if we may anticipate matters a little, was a notable pronouncement. It was a fighting speech in his best manner, and lends life to the dull pages of the Association's history. The main theme of this utterance was the change which had come over the policy of Government with regard to higher education, particularly in the direction of throttling it gradually by the withdrawal of State aid. Pherozeshah examined the recommendations of Lord Ripon's Education Commission in that behalf, and showed that while it was anxious to encourage a gradual and unforced transfer of institutions, it was not prepared to make any suggestions which might be construed into a demand for the immediate or general withdrawal of the State from the provision of the means of higher education. The Report was clear on the point:

The Department should cordially welcome every effort of the kind, and should accept it, if it can be accepted without real loss to the community; but while encouraging all such offers, its attitude should be, not that of withdrawing from a charge found to be burdensome, and of transferring the burden to other shoulders, but of conferring a boon on those worthy of confidence, and of inviting voluntary associations to co-operate with the Government in the work and responsibilities of national education. We have certainly no desire to recommend any measures that will have the effect of checking the spread and continuous improvement of higher education.

In this connection, the temptation to drag in Mr. Lee-Warner, one of the ablest and most bigoted opponents of Indian aspirations, was too great to be resisted, and his exposition of the new policy came in

for some, refreshing criticism at the hands of Pherozeshah. There were some delightful hits, and officials high and low got a rough handling. The niggardliness of the Government towards the University was contrasted with their extravagance in other directions, and the claim put forward by Lord Harris that the expenditure on education in the Presidency compared favourably with that incurred in other countries was disposed of without difficulty. Seldom had the educational policy of the Government been subjected to such trenchant and incisive criticism.

Before the Association reached years of maturity, it lost its energy and enthusiasm, and gradually sank into torpor. Conducted with vigour, it might have exercised considerable influence on the progress of education in the Presidency. As it was, it left the battle to individual reformers, whose efforts were greatly hampered by the absence of a well organized body of public opinion, such as the Association could have created by sustained and vigorous action.

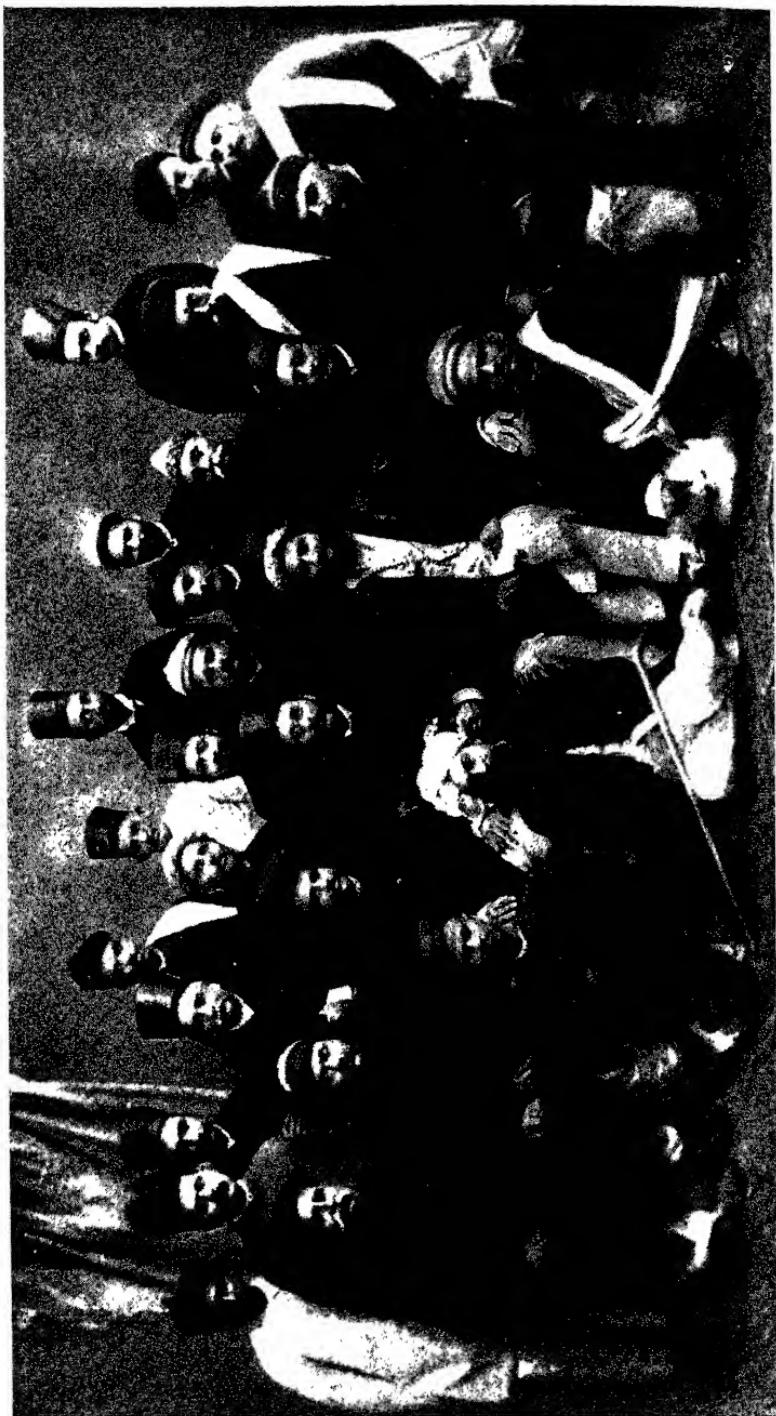
We have said enough to show the nature of Pherozeshah's interest in educational matters at the time of his election as Dean, to which reference has already been made. The contest was keen, his opponent Mr. James Jardine being a prominent member of the Bar and the Senate. The defeat of the latter appears to have caused mortification to a certain section, and an excited individual wrote to the papers condemning the election, and attributing it to the "spirit of mischievous combination for the exaltation of members of their own race that has recently been growing among the Parsees." It was said that Pherozeshah had taken little deliberative or administrative part as a member of the Faculty. This may have been true in a certain measure, for Pherozeshah's numerous preoccupations and frequent absence from Bombay on professional engagements, prevented his taking a continuously active part in the affairs of the University. But the writer did less than justice when he ignored Pherozeshah's contributions to the debates in the Senate on important occasions. This was pointed out by a Parsi correspondent, who effectively answered the various objections raised against the election. He showed that it had nothing to do with sectarian considerations, for the Parsis had abstained from putting forward Pherozeshah's claims to the judgship on the High Court Bench, which had fallen vacant a

little while before. The reason why he had been elected Dean was, that the Syndicate had lost its prestige in the eyes of the public by the indifferent way in which it had discharged its functions, and consequently required "a competent and independent person to preside over their meetings and guide their deliberations."

The correspondent might have gone further and pointed out that Pherozeshah's deep and abiding interest in the cause of education, manifested from a very early age, his insistence on the benefits of higher education, and his anxiety to see that neither primary nor technical education should be allowed to claim precedence over it, were in themselves sufficient grounds for placing him in a position of influence in the deliberations of the University. How wisely the Senate exercised its franchise on the present occasion was abundantly made clear in later years, when the great gifts which had distinguished Pherozeshah in other spheres were brought to bear upon the affairs of the University, and gave him a predominance in its counsels which was never questioned, except for a short period during the administration of Lord Sydenham, who did not scruple to utilize an officialized body for the furtherance of his reactionary ideas in matters of education. As a matter of fact, the very next year —to anticipate matters once again—he initiated a somewhat important measure of reform, when he got the Senate to agree to the appointment of a committee of inquiry into the working of the system of appointing examiners. In April 1890, he addressed a letter to the Syndicate, together with a carefully drawn up memorandum on the question of the appointment of boards of examiners. A reply to this letter was sent by the Registrar, conveying the unanimous opinion of the Syndicate that the change suggested was uncalled for. Public opinion was on the side of Pherozeshah, however, and he brought the matter up before the Senate in another form some time later in July. Among his strongest opponents on this occasion was Mr. Telang, who had been elevated to the Bench a little while before. Pherozeshah carried the day, and as the *Indian Spectator* remarked, it spoke well for the good sense of the members of the Senate that they should have accepted his proposal, and recognized the necessity for the adoption of a uniform system of appointing examiners and conducting examinations.



Gathering at the First Indian National Congress, 1885



Reception Committee, Fifth Indian National Congress

## CHAPTER XIII

### LEADER OF THE CONGRESS 1889-1890

THE national organization brought into existence in Bombay in 1885 by the labours of a handful of patriots, had lived through four eventful years. Ushered into the world under the happiest of auspices, its growing activities soon created suspicion and alarm in the minds of Englishmen, official and non-official, and the Congress became an object of abuse and ridicule, showered upon it with an extravagance which defeated its own object. The movement spread far and wide, and speedily gathered strength and influence in every part of the country. The modest number of 72 delegates, who had gathered at Bombay in 1885, had mounted up to 412 the year after, and had shown a progressive rise. Besides securing a numerous following, the Congress, under the inspiring leadership of Mr. Hume, had started active propaganda work in every town and district. Two of the pamphlets issued by it had arrested widespread attention, appealing as they did both in manner and matter to the popular imagination. These proceedings aroused bitter hostility, and Anglo-India and officialdom, and the Press which represented them, started an active campaign of misrepresentation and vilification.

When the Congress met at Allahabad in 1888, it did so in an atmosphere of bitterness and strife. The Reception Committee had great difficulty in finding a site, and it was only when a private mansion with extensive grounds was secured through the patriotic efforts of a certain nobleman, that the Congress was able to overcome the obstructions placed in its way. But this was not all. An anti-Congress propaganda had been started, led, unfortunately, by that distinguished Mohamedan, Sir Syed Ahmed, and supported chiefly, as Mr. Eardley Norton put it, by an "array of illiterate knights and rajahs, who atone for their defective education by the violence of their expletives."

Authoritative official condemnation was not wanting, either. In a

subject was proposed by Mr. Eardley Norton, one of the earliest and warmest supporters of the Congress, with a reputation for ability and independence which stood very high. It expressed appreciation of the concessions proposed by the Commission, but emphatically declared that full justice would never be done to the people of the country until the Civil Service examination was held simultaneously in England and in India.

Pherozeshah seconded the proposition and put the case for the larger employment of the people of the country on the ground of political as well as economic necessity. Dadabhai Naoroji had over and over again pointed out that apart from every other consideration, it was sound economy to associate Indians more closely in the administration of the country. Pherozeshah going further contended that the political necessity was even greater than the economic. According to him :

When the time came to settle the principles on which British rule in India was to be carried on, it was clearly recognized by those sober statesmen who guided the destinies of England at that time, that even for Orientals an absolute despotism was an impossible creed in practical politics. It was clearly recognized that even the most benevolent and most paternal despotism must, if it wants to be stable and permanent, place its roots in the country in which it carries on that rule; and this principle was soberly though eloquently enunciated by Lord Macaulay in 1833, when he said that for the sake of English honour and English wisdom, it was absolutely imperative that the natives of this country should have an equal share in the administration.

How far this economic and political necessity of associating Indians more closely with the administration was recognized, may be gauged from the fact that more than fifteen years later the figures compiled by Lord Curzon's Government themselves showed that out of 1,370 appointments carrying more than Rs. 1,000 a month, only 92 were held by Indians. Such was the recognition of the principle laid down as far back as 1833 that there should be no 'governing caste' in India.

Another interesting subject for discussion before the Allahabad session related to the Arms Act. The resolution before the Congress was an affirmation of that which had been passed a year previous, and declared that the Act should be so modified as to "enable all persons to possess and wear arms, unless debarred therefrom, either as individuals or members of particular communities or classes, by the orders of the Government of India (or any local authority empowered by the Government of India in that behalf) for reasons to be recorded in writing and duly published." This proposition evoked some opposition, and Mr. Telang was among those who thought that it was dictated purely by sentimental considerations. He feared the use that might be made of an indiscriminate liberty to carry arms. Pherozeshah, who followed him, maintained on the other hand, that, whatever might be the sentimental aspect of the question, there was one very sound reason in support of the proposition, and that was that "you cannot, and ought not to emasculate a whole nation." Once the Indian people became emasculated, it would be a very long time before they would recover their manliness and vigour. Many of those present, he said, would remember the case of James II, who, when in his hour of peril, he appealed to the Duke of Bedford (whose son had been judicially murdered by the King) for help, was told by the old nobleman, "I had once a son whom I could have sent to your assistance. But I have not got him now." In the same way, in some hour of need, India might have something similar to say to England. The speaker recognized the difficulties in the way, but he maintained that if they followed a far-sighted policy, they would realize from the lessons of History that it could never be wise to emasculate a nation.

This sentiment and the story which illustrated it appealed greatly to the audience, and after some further discussion, in the course of which Mr. Surendranath Bannerji supported the proposition, it was put to the vote and carried by a large majority. *The Bombay Gazette*, among other newspapers, condemned the resolution. It was of opinion that it did not express the better mind of the Congress, and that Pherozeshah's predilection for freedom to carry arms on the ground that a whole nation ought not to be emasculated, read strangely in the light of local history. *The Gazette* reminded him of

an occasion on which it was deemed necessary to prohibit the carrying even of walking sticks in the streets of Bombay, and concluded that the Congress would have improved its position if it had declined to be led into dubious paths in relation to the subject.

We must now leave the Allahabad Congress and hurry on to the one held at Bombay in the following year. The venue was decided upon after a consideration of the relative merits of Poona and Bombay. At first, it appears from a letter of Mr. Ranade to Pherozeshah written in the early part of January, the once proud capital of the Peshwas was not anxious to enjoy the honour of which she had on a former occasion been deprived by a cruel chance. But later on, her young men bestirred themselves, and she was eager to shoulder the burden of holding the Congress in her midst. Ultimately, however, Bombay once again robbed her of the privilege.

From the personality of those who took a leading part in it, and the numbers that consequently flocked to it, the Bombay session proved to be the most memorable gathering of the "unconventional convention" that had yet taken place. Very few Congresses indeed have surpassed it in brilliance. The presidential chair was occupied by Sir William Wedderburn, who had retired from service two years previously, loved and honoured by all who had come in contact with him. The glowing tributes that were paid to his worth on his retirement from office, by the leaders of public opinion in Bombay, at a Town Hall meeting convened by the Sheriff, were no conventional expressions of regard, but were the outcome of a genuine appreciation of Sir William's rare devotion to the country; and that feeling found further expression in the people offering him on the present occasion the highest honour that lay within their gift.

The privilege of welcoming the delegates to this historic Congress was conceded to Pherozeshah as an appropriate recognition of the fact of his being the most outstanding figure in the public life of Western India at this period. A more popular selection could not have been made, at least, from the point of view of a Bombay audience. But the biggest 'draw' of all was the presence of that great champion of democracy, Charles Bradlaugh, whose magnetic eloquence had thrilled vast audiences in his native land, and whose stormy career had deeply struck the public imagination. He had

been persuaded to take an interest in Indian questions by the friends of this country in England, and had addressed a number of public meetings. He had recently prepared a draft Bill for introduction into Parliament for the reform of the Legislative Councils. It embodied in legal form what was then believed to be the general view of the Congress on the subject. Mr. Bradlaugh's object in visiting India was to ascertain on the spot the mature views of the educated classes on certain important points in connection with the Bill, which had been translated into many Indian languages, and had received most careful consideration all over the country.

It was a great gathering. The number of delegates was 1,889, corresponding curiously with the year in which the session was held. A vast structure had been erected on a site at Byculla belonging to Sir Albert Sassoon and next to his mansion, the "Sans-Souci," to accommodate the delegates and visitors, who numbered nearly 6,000. The burden of making the necessary arrangements fell mostly upon the Chairman of the Reception Committee, and on the local secretary, the indefatigable Dinshaw Wacha, whose untiring efforts to promote the success of the Bombay session were afterwards appreciated by the presentation of a piece of plate by the Reception Committee.

It was a worthy occasion for the exercise of Pherozeshah's oratorical gifts, and he rose splendidly to it. Sarcasm, banter, ridicule were among the weapons with which he usually confounded his opponents, and he employed them with deadly effect in his speech of welcome to the delegates of the Congress. It was a telling vindication of the essential loyalty and national character of the movement. At the outset, the Chairman contended that, though the delegates present might not be the chosen of the people by any scientific mode of election, they virtually and substantially represented them, their wants, wishes, sentiments and aspirations in all the various ways in which representation manifests and works itself out in the early stages of its progressive development. He went on to recount the services which the Congress had directly and indirectly done to the country. It had brought into clear and emphatic recognition the fact of the growth of the national idea amongst the people. It had done that which was a necessary prelude to all reform, a thorough

sifting and searching of some of the most vital of Indian political problems.

And now that the proposals of the Congress have bravely stood the test, our opponents have recourse to the familiar device, which is so often employed to cover retreat, and they are lost in wonder that we are making so much fuss about things which have nothing new in them, and which have been long contemplated by many an Anglo-Indian statesman at the head of affairs. Now, gentlemen, we are quite ready at once to plead guilty to this not very dreadful impeachment. But though it may not be said of these statesmen, what was once said of the anti-Reform party in England, and can certainly be said of some Anglo-Indians, that they never have anything kind or generous to say of the Indian people, this may surely be said of them, that though they do sometimes have something generous to say of the Indians, they have never shown the slightest disposition to confer upon them any portion of political rights. If the Congress has done nothing more than quicken into action these political *Yogis*, so long lost in contemplation, it will not have laboured in vain.

When the cheers which greeted this sentiment had subsided, Pherozeshah passed on to deal with the opposition to the Congress, which by a lot of wire-pulling had culminated in the formation of an Anti-Congress United Patriotic Association. He referred to the activities of the two leading spirits of the organization, and drew a humorous picture of the difficulties which had arisen through the combination of two such personalities:

They were like the Scotch terrier, who was so covered with hair, that you could not tell which was the head or which was the tail of it. (Laughter and cheers.) Sir Syed Ahmed pulled vigorously one way, Raja Shiva Prasad as vigorously the other; and they so pulled between them the poor popinjay they had set up, that it burst, and poured out—to the amazement of a few and the amusement of us all—not the real patriotic stuff with which it had been announced to be filled, but the whitest and purest sawdust. (Renewed laughter and cheers.)

Referring next to the charge of disloyalty, Pherozeshah maintained that in its keen solicitude for the safety and permanence of the Empire, in which lay implanted the roots of the welfare, the prosperity and good government of the country, the Congress was more loyal than Anglo-Indians themselves. He concluded his address by paying a graceful tribute to Mr. Bradlaugh and offering a hearty welcome to him on behalf of the Congress.

The speech was well received. "The whole assembly laughed and cheered and clapped their hands with an excited delight, which showed how they echoed the sentiments expressed by the speaker." Such demonstrations by themselves, perhaps, do not mean much. No superlative effort is required to rouse an audience charged with emotion; various circumstances lend adventitious aid. But the speech earned the appreciation of a wider public, and the papers next morning spoke of it as an eloquent and vigorous pronouncement. There was criticism, of course, of the point of view of the speaker, and of the distinguished President who followed him. One journal, by no means unsympathetic towards Indian national aspirations, remarked:

Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta yesterday spoke very confidently of the national spirit whose growth had been fostered by the Congress, and Sir William Wedderburn described the aims of the movement to be to revive the national spirit of the country. It was fortunate for both gentlemen that there was no *advocatus diaboli* at hand to ask them to define the meaning of the word. There never was a time when the term national had any other than a local meaning in India.

Two incidents in connection with this memorable Congress must be noticed here. One was an address to Mr. Bradlaugh on behalf of the Congress, in terms of a resolution moved by Pherozeshah on the second day of the session in response to a widespread desire. The drafting had been entrusted to Mr. W. C. Bonnerji, Mr. Adam and himself. The address was presented in the Congress Hall after the close of the session, in the presence of a vast gathering, which included a large number of members of the European community,

drawn to the meeting by the remarkable personality of the great democrat. Addresses and caskets and tokens of all sorts had poured in from all parts of the country, and they formed a picturesque collection. The chair was taken by Pherozeshah, who, in a few chosen words, asked Sir William Wedderburn to present the address on behalf of the Congress. That having been done, Mr. Bradlaugh still weak and feeble from his recent illness, addressed the audience in words that went straight to the heart of his hearers. He spoke to them of their limitations; he encouraged them to persevere ceaselessly, and he reminded them that great reforms had always been slowly won. "Those who first enterprise them were called seditious, and sometimes sent to jail as criminals; but the speech and thought live on. No imprisonment can crush a truth; it may hinder it for a moment, it may delay it for an hour, but it gets an electric elasticity inside the dungeon walls, and it grows and moves the whole world when it comes out." He concluded by declaring that he would always endeavour according to his judgment to promote greater happiness for India's people, greater peace for Britain's rule, greater comfort for the whole of Britain's subjects. The cruel hand of Death, however, was soon to dash these hopes to the ground, and to snatch away another of those rare individuals whose hearts throb for the wrongs and sufferings of their fellowmen under whatever sky they live, and whose love of freedom knows no geographical or racial limitations.

Another feature of the 'Bradlaugh session,' interesting in a different sense, was the manner in which the Congress responded to an appeal for funds for carrying on propagandist work. An Indian Political Agency had a short while before been started in England, and the various Standing Committees of the Congress had promised fixed contributions for its maintenance. Unfortunately, and there is no reason to gloss over the fact, many a staunch patriot in those days disliked the idea of putting his hands in his pockets, and the promised funds were consequently not forthcoming in two or three centres, Bombay being among them. Not to pursue a sordid story in all its details, it is sufficient to say that Mr. Hume was obliged to write very sharply to Telang, Pherozeshah and other leaders, and the necessary remittances were thereupon sent. There, this tale should have ended, but unluckily, some person, probably on the look-out

for such incidents, got hold of Mr. Hume's caustic reminder, though marked strictly private and confidential, and published it. There were much rejoicing and jubilation thereat in the camp of Anglo-India, and its organs both here and in England made as much political capital out of it as they could. These attacks, malicious enough in spirit, but legitimate in political warfare, roused a general feeling that things should be so managed as to make such a reproach impossible in future. One of the last resolutions, therefore, of the Bombay session decided, among other financial matters, that a sum of Rs. 45,000 be raised for the expenses of Congress work in this country and in England during the ensuing year. Speeches were made in support of it by Mr. Surendranath Bannerji and Mr. Eardley Norton, and a Madras delegate having promptly offered a thousand rupees and Mr. Norton having added a thousand thereto, the hat was sent round and a handsome collection was made on the spot. A Congress deputation was also resolved upon, and Messrs. George Yule, Adam, Man Mohan Ghosh, Sharfuddin, J. E. Howard, Pherozeshah, Surendranath Bannerji, R. N. Mudholkar, W. C. Bonnerji, Eardley Norton and Hume were appointed to represent in England the Congress view of political reforms. Of these, it may be noted, the five last-named went and addressed a large number of public and private meetings, and rendered very useful service to the national cause. The Congress of 1889 thus proved an unqualified success from every point of view.

From the chairmanship of the Reception Committee to the presidentship of the Congress is a natural transition, and in Pherozeshah's case it took place rapidly. The very next year after the Bombay Congress, he found himself installed in the presidential chair in Calcutta, an honour than which there was then no higher to which a worker in the national cause could aspire. It was said by unfriendly critics that the honour was going a-begging, and that it was offered to Mr. Herbert Gladstone and several others before it fell to the lot of Pherozeshah. However that may be, there is no doubt that the latter richly deserved the distinction which his countrymen conferred upon him. Though still in the prime of life, he had a record behind him of which older leaders might well have been proud. Despite the worries and distractions of a busy practice,

he had been able to associate himself with public movements touching the corporate life of the people at many points, and had made his mark in every one of them. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things, that the politically-minded classes in all provinces should call upon him to guide their deliberations in the parliament which they had set up.

The election gave universal satisfaction. Public opinion was reflected in the Press, and many newspapers contained appreciative references to the President-elect. The comments of *The Gujarati* may be singled out as giving the best presentation of the popular view of Pherozeshah's personality :

A better selection it would have been impossible to make, and we must heartily congratulate him upon the great honour bestowed upon him in recognition of the exceptionally independent attitude he has always taken in public life, and of his long and zealous public services. Gifted with great oratorical powers, endowed with a generous heart and highly trained intellect, possessed of a commanding voice and presence that enforces willing obedience, and eminently fitted by nature to be a leader of men, Mr. Mehta is bound to leave upon the assembled delegates and visitors an impression that it would be difficult to efface.

The Ripon Club, which he had founded in 1885 for social and semi-political objects, and which had at once taken a distinctive place among social institutions in Bombay, gave him a banquet on the eve of his departure. The chairman, Mr. Sorabji Framji Patel, a well-known figure in commercial circles, exhorted young men to follow in the footsteps of the guest of the evening. Pherozeshah's reply was in the nature of a modest disclaimer. It is somewhat difficult to be modest when replying to a post-prandial eulogy of one's character and career, but Pherozeshah was in a happy vein, and gracefully diverted the attention of his audience to two great Parsis, whose examples he said might be more profitably followed, Dadabhai Naoroji and Naoroji Furdunji, who bore respectively the proud titles of the Grand Old Man of India and the Tribune of the People.

It was a tribute paid with delicacy to the two men after whom he said he had shaped his public career.

In Calcutta, Pherozeshah was received with the honours which are usually accorded to the President-elect. The national movement of which the Congress was the embodiment was rapidly gaining in strength and influence, and the attendance at the Calcutta session was large, as many as 8,000 people being present on the first day. The Chairman of the Reception Committee was his old comrade in arms, Man Mohan Ghosh. After his speech of welcome, Sir Romesh Chunder Mitter, at one time acting Chief Justice of Bengal, the first Indian to attain to such a proud position under the Crown, rose and proposed Pherozeshah to the chair in a brief speech. He remarked that by his brilliant career at the Bar and the conspicuous part he had played in public movements, the President's name had become almost a household word among the educated classes in India. A Mohamedan nobleman from Lucknow seconded the proposition. He was followed by Mr. Ananda Charlu of Madras, who observed that he did not intend to undertake "the proverbially thankless task of painting the lily, as Pherozeshah was known to all India equally." The proposition after being further supported was put to the vote and carried with acclamation, and Pherozeshah was duly installed in the chair.

The presidential address was in a vein characteristic of the Bombay leader. There were no attempts at originality, no lofty flights of imagination. It was a sober, eminently practical and refreshingly vigorous presentation of the Congress cause. It was a sort of speech which, with certain differences in phraseology, might have been made on the floor of the House of Commons from the Opposition front bench. After thanking those present for the honour they had done him, the President referred to the mischievous attempts which had been made to isolate the Parsis from the movement. He declared his creed of nationalism in words which have often been quoted:

To my mind, a Parsi is a better and truer Parsi, as a Mohamedan, or a Hindu, is a better and truer Mohamedan or Hindu, the more he is attached to the land which gave him birth, the

more he is bound in brotherly relations and affection to all the children of the soil, the more he recognizes the fraternity of all the native communities of the country, and the immutable bond which binds them together in the pursuit of common aims and objects under a common government.

The President next dealt with the charge which had often been levelled that the Congress was demanding full-blown representative institutions, which in England had been the growth of centuries. He showed that they had not learned the lessons of history so badly as to make any such foolish demands. They recognized the necessity and inevitability of a slow and cautious advance. If anybody could be charged with defying the teachings of history and experience, it was their opponents when they talked of sitting still and doing nothing, until such time as the masses were educated and able to understand their rights and privileges. Till then, apparently, their interests were to be left in the safe keeping of a benevolent bureaucracy, which would look after them better than their own countrymen could be expected to do. In Pherozeshah's opinion, these pretensions were ridiculous :

We have also proved that, in spite of our education, and even with our racial and religious differences, the microscopic minority can far better and far more intuitively represent the needs and the aspirations of their own countrymen than the still more microscopic minority of the omniscient district officers, whose colloquial knowledge of the Indian languages seldom rises above the knowledge of English possessed, for instance, by French waiters at Paris hotels which proudly blazon forth the legend *Ici on parle Anglais*.

After some more sundry 'sparring,' Pherozeshah turned to deal with the question which was most agitating men's minds at the moment, the reform of the Legislative Councils. He began with Mr. Bradlaugh's Bill, drawn on the lines sketched and formulated at the Congress. Two important results, he said, had flowed from the inception of that measure. One was that it had evoked criticism of a most useful character, particularly from men like Sir William

Hunter and Sir Richard Garth, which indicated the lines on which the Bill needed to be modified. The next result was, that, "it at once dispelled the fit of profound cogitation, in which men at the head of Indian affairs are so apt to be lost that they can never spontaneously recover from it." Lord Cross's Indian Councils Bill had promptly seen the light of day in the House of Lords. It was, however, a measure of a halting and unsatisfactory character. The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State seemed to have been obsessed with a conception of the Indian people as a sort of Oliver Twist, always asking for more, to whom it would be therefore a piece of prudent policy to begin with offering as little as possible. "The rights of interpellation and of the discussion of the Budget were granted, but the living forces of the elective principle which alone could properly work them, were not breathed into the organization of the enlarged Councils."

Lord Salisbury had sought to justify this grave defect in the Bill on the ground that the principle of election or government by representation was not an Eastern idea, and that it did not fit Eastern traditions or minds. Some portion of the address was, accordingly, devoted to exposing the fallacy of the Prime Minister's sweeping generalization. Pherozeshah showed on the authority of Sir Henry Maine and Mr. Anstey, as great a scholar as he was a lawyer, that some form of self-government had existed in this country from very remote times. Our village communities are always held up for admiration, whenever the question arises of India's fitness for democratic forms of government. Our orators wax eloquent over many other institutions resurrected from an almost forgotten Past. These patriotic sentiments are good enough for party warfare, but responsible leaders have need to employ them with caution. Pherozeshah was, therefore, careful enough to observe that it was true that "circumstances never allowed the representative genius of the people to develop forms and organizations for higher political functions." But, he maintained, it was no less true that the seed and the soil were there, waiting only for the skilful hand and the watchful mind, which Congressmen believed they had secured in the presence of Englishmen in this country. Perhaps, the best answer to Lord Salisbury's dictum was that given by the *Manchester Guardian*, then,

as now, the sturdy champion of a Liberalism unflinching in its application to every part of the world:

Lord Salisbury's great argument is that the elective principle is not an Eastern idea. It is sufficient perhaps to say that English rule is not an Eastern idea, yet it prevails in India, and that it is by Western rather than by Eastern ideas that it is to be strengthened and made permanent. Representation is the mark of our political liberties.

It would be tedious to follow the presidential address in the many controversial points which it discussed, but an observation dealing with a well-worn argument deserves to be recorded. Referring to the parrot cry which the opponents of the Congress were uttering from a hundred points of vantage, that the voice of the Congress was but the voice of a section and not of the people, Pherozeshah observed:

If the masses were capable of giving articulate expression to definite political demands, then the time would have arrived, not for consultative Councils, but for representative institutions. It is because they are still unable to do so that the function and the duty devolve upon their educated and enlightened compatriots to feel, to understand and to interpret their grievances and requirements, and to suggest and to indicate how these can be best redressed and met. History teaches us that such has been the law of widening progress in all ages and all countries, notably in England itself.

The address closed with a note of that robust optimism, which always characterized Pherozeshah's utterances, and which sustained him throughout his arduous political career. He said he had no fears that English statesmanship would not ultimately respond to the call. He had unbounded faith in the living and fertilizing principles of English culture and English civilization:

All the great forces of English life and society, moral, social, intellectual, political, are, if slowly, yet steadily and irresistibly,

declaring themselves for the choice which will make the connection of England and India a blessing to themselves and to the whole world for countless generations. Our Congress asks but to serve as a modest hand-maid to that movement, asks but to be allowed to show the pits and the falls, asks but to be allowed to join in the blessing which England will as surely earn as there is an 'Eternal that maketh for Righteousness.'

Enthusiastic cheering greeted the conclusion of this eloquent and manly address, which created a deep impression in the country. Here and there, some captious critic fastened upon one or two controversial points for the purpose of disparagement. The *Rast-Goftar* attacked the President for seeking to identify Parsis with the national movement. It hoped that the community would not accept his "visionary view," and forget its individuality as a race. *The Times of India* thought there was nothing new in what Pherozeshah had said, and that so far as the address went, the National Congress was apparently without a programme. Such critics apart, the general opinion was that the speech gave "a key-note of moderation and good-sense to the deliberations of the Congress." Among other competent judges, Sir William Wedderburn wrote and congratulated Pherozeshah upon the "weighty and appropriate address" which he had delivered. *The Bombay Gazette* was particularly gratified, that so far as the President was concerned, the extravagances of the pamphleteering stage of the movement had been abandoned, and that Bombay, in providing the Congress with a President, had communicated something of its own spirit to the assembly.

The subsequent proceedings of the session of 1890 call for little comment. They came to an end with the customary vote of thanks to the chair, proposed on this occasion by a Bengali lady. As Man Mohan Ghosh remarked, it was meant as a compliment both to the ladies and to the gallant President. The principal resolutions were of the usual order and covered a multitude of subjects. They were supported by speeches of considerable eloquence and ability, and if it were possible for a dead wall of opposition to be battered down by rhetoric and argument, then much could the Congress have claimed to its credit during its chequered career. But like the

recommendation on the subject of the separation of judicial from executive functions, which Lord Dufferin had pronounced to be "a counsel of perfection," the annual appeals of the Congress, even when admittedly reasonable, continued to fall on heedless ears.

It would be profitless, therefore, to discuss the proceedings of the Congress. There was one resolution, however, which deserves a passing notice. It had reference to the question of the attendance of officials at meetings of the Congress. A few days before the Calcutta session was held, the Bengal Government had issued a notification prohibiting its officers from attending it even as visitors. This had been followed by a letter from Mr. Lyon, the Private Secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor, to the Secretary of the Congress, returning some complimentary cards of admission which had been sent by the latter. Mr. Lyon stated that the orders of the Government of India prohibited the presence of Government officials at such meetings. Thereupon, the Congress passed a resolution authorizing the President to draw the attention of the Viceroy to this declaration, and to inquire whether the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal had correctly interpreted the orders of the Government of India. The best observation on this occasion was that made by the President himself in putting the resolution to the vote. He placed the matter in the proper perspective when he said that it was a question of very little importance to them. "It may involve the gravest discredit to Government, and we are bound to give them an opportunity of extricating themselves from the undignified and ludicrous position, if not worse, in which these precious orders apparently place them; but beyond this, so far as we are concerned, the matter having served to amuse us for an hour may be dropped." Cheers and laughter greeted this neat way of putting the matter, and an excited audience was put into good humour at once.

In accordance with the resolution, Pherozeshah put himself in communication with Lord Lansdowne. The reply that was received was a fine example of official ambiguity and circumlocution. Mr. Hume in a confidential letter to Pherozeshah characterized it as "a mere juggle of words." This letter of Lord Lansdowne was never published, as Mr. Hume urged Pherozeshah to withhold its publication, pending the result of the negotiations which were then going

on. The Viceroy had asked Mr. Hume to see him, and a free and frank discussion had taken place between the two. The upshot of it all was that an official statement was made that the Bengal Government had misunderstood the orders of the Government of India, and that all that was prohibited was active participation in the proceedings of public meetings. The communique went on to say that the Congress movement was regarded as perfectly legitimate in itself, and as "representing in India what in Europe would be called the more advanced Liberal party, as distinguished from the great body of Conservative opinion which exists side by side with it." The Government desired that its servants should observe an attitude of strict neutrality in their relations with both parties.

This "candid and characteristically British declaration" gave general satisfaction in political circles, and silenced those critics who had expressed their jubilation at what they regarded as a snub to the Congress. When the Congress met in the following year at Nagpur, the Chief Commissioner, Mr. Anthony Macdonell, now Lord Macdonell, openly declared that so far as he was concerned, every official who wished it was at full liberty to attend the Congress as a visitor, and that he would think no better or worse of any officer who did or did not do so. The controversy might thus be said to have induced a saner policy on the part of Government, though it has not prevented occasional attempts being made by provincial administrations to guard their officials carefully against contamination with the Congress and its activities.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GOVERNMENT AND THE CORPORATION— ELECTION OF DADABHAI NAOROJI TO PARLIAMENT—POONA PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE—JUNAGADH APPOINTMENT 1890—1892

IN April, 1890, Lord Reay laid down the reins of office amidst the general regret of the Presidency, whose fortunes he had guided with such conspicuous ability and high sense of duty. He left an enduring monument behind him in the charter of local self-government which he was largely instrumental in giving to Bombay, the measures for the advancement of technical education which he carried out and the spirit of progress which he generally infused into the administration. Bombay gave the departing Governor a send-off worthy of the man. There was some talk that the European community would show opposition at the public meeting which was being organized, and the promoters became somewhat anxious. Pherozeshah, however, was not disconcerted in the least, and showed himself quite ready to fight it out. But the opposition fizzled out, and the meeting was an unqualified success. Though Pherozeshah differed radically from Lord Reay in some of his views on educational problems, he took an active part in the demonstrations in honour of the retiring Governor, and himself drafted the address presented by the Bombay Presidency Association.

Shortly after Lord Reay left the country, the relations between the Government and the Corporation, never very happy, entered upon an acute phase. On the one hand was a bureaucracy with its traditional contempt for any other point of view but its own, determined to impose its will on an institution which was intended to be self-governing. On the other hand, was a Corporation which, led by Pherozeshah and other stalwarts, was extremely jealous of its dignity and independence, and resentful of dictation from outside. Occasions for conflict were not wanting in those days, when many questions of

policy had yet to be settled between the two bodies. One of such disputes was as to the relative responsibility of the Government and the Corporation for the cost of primary education in Bombay. We shall discuss the merits of the issue when we approach the consideration of its final settlement after a long and protracted controversy which dragged on for seventeen years, until it was laid at rest, chiefly through the exertions of Pherozeshah. It is sufficient to note that on the present occasion, the discussion arose through a letter from the Government to the Corporation, raising incidentally the whole question of their respective obligations in respect of primary education. Under the Act, it was to be regarded as a joint liability, but in what manner the continually increasing responsibility under that head were to be divided between the two bodies was not altogether free from doubt and continually led to disputes. The letter was referred to a committee, which guided by Pherozeshah, drafted a representation which refuted in detail the various contentions advanced by Government. When the report of the committee came up before the Corporation on 17 July 1890, a long discussion took place. The two sides of the case were presented with considerable ability by Pherozeshah on the one hand, and by Mr. Kirkham, an educationist of some eminence, on the other. Pherozeshah maintained that the duty of making provision for primary education devolved jointly upon the Government and the Corporation, and he was emphatic in maintaining that the latter would not spend an anna more than it was necessary to do under the provisions of the Act.

The report was adopted by the Corporation and forwarded to Government, who took the Advocate-General's opinion on the question of the legal liability, and sent a reply covering all the points at issue. When the matter was again placed before the Corporation, Mr. Kirkham attempted to get his colleagues to accept the principles enunciated in the reply in question. Pherozeshah not being present, the Corporation wisely decided to refer the letter to the same committee which had considered the question on the previous occasion. It was not till the February following that another full-dress debate took place in the Corporation. The committee had made a strong report at the end of which it had expressed a hope that Government would see their way to dispel an impression which was

gaining ground, that the introduction of the new policy of local self-government was being turned from its real purpose into a means of shifting new burdens from the shoulders of Government to those of local bodies without the transfer of equivalent revenue. In moving the adoption of the report, Pherozeshah made a speech, masterly in its exposition of the principles underlying the question, and in its analysis of the obligations imposed on the Municipality by the Act. It carried the day, in spite of Mr. Kirkham's able advocacy of the Government view, and the proposition was passed by an overwhelming majority.

The controversy was carried outside the Corporation, and the two protagonists expounded in the newspapers the position they had taken up. Pherozeshah's view was that Government had done very little for primary education, when the liability was on their shoulders alone, as was the case up to 1888. Now that it was a joint responsibility, they had become very liberal in their ideas, and wanted the Corporation to bear all sorts of burdens, which they themselves were not willing to share. Mr. Kirkham's contention was that the obligation which rested upon the Municipality was statutory, and had to be adequately discharged, irrespective of any other consideration. In other words, municipal funds were to be saddled with an ever-increasing burden, which Government themselves had never shown a disposition to shoulder. That the Corporation was saved from such an indefinite liability was mainly due to the skill, resourcefulness and determination with which Pherozeshah stood up for its rights in the matter.

Another subject on which the Corporation joined issue with the Government was with reference to the provision of a hospital for infectious diseases. Government wrote to the Corporation asking them to provide such a hospital, and in the event of failure to carry out the requisition, threatened to use a 'bludgeon' clause provided in the Act of 1888, which empowered them to take the necessary steps, and to recover the cost from the Municipality in a court of law. When this letter was placed before the Corporation, Pherozeshah, in moving that a committee be appointed to draft a reply, remarked that the manner in which the requisition had been made upon them showed that "the entity talked of as Government was composed of

gentlemen who were open to human frailties like themselves, or in other words, that they had lost their temper. If that was not the case, they could not understand why those gentlemen should resort to the use of what he might call such an inartistic instrument as the 'bludgeon'." He proceeded to argue the case on its merits, and after some opposition, got the Corporation to accept his proposal. *The Pioneer*, in commenting on these proceedings in an article headed "Municipal Hysterics in Bombay," sought to connect the controversy between the Government and the Municipality, with the agitation which was then going on in the Parsi community regarding the Rajabai Tower tragedy, involving the death of two young Parsi women, and which led to a sensational and long drawn out trial in the High Court. The newspaper darkly hinted at the mischief done by a disturbing Parsi element in the discussions in the Corporation. One of its Bombay contemporaries remarked on this that such a way of interpreting events was a little too imaginative for people on this side of India. Referring to Pherozeshah, it reminded the Allahabad journal that though one prominent member of the community had certainly taken an active part in formulating local resistance to Government demands, he had had no share in the agitation which the Rajabai Tower Case had set on foot, and had, on the contrary, deprecated the excitement, which the community had worked itself into over that tragic incident, about which he held very decided views opposed to those of his co-religionists.

The committee drafted a strong representation, which was ultimately forwarded to Government. In their reply, the latter complained of the want of respect shown to them, and adhered to the position they had taken up. When the matter came again before the Corporation in December 1891, the leader of the House, as Pherozeshah was then recognized, in "an able and very exhaustive speech as long as *Paradise Lost*, which occupied the whole of the sitting" (as a newspaper report stated), moved for the appointment of a committee to draw up an appeal to the Government of India against the orders of the Bombay Government. He said that in his opinion it was not straightforward on the part of Government to turn from being a party into being a judge. Government in effect had said, "as we failed to persuade you to do this, here is a 'bludgeon'; so out

with your money." But there was also a bludgeon in the hands of the Corporation, although it was only for defensive purposes, and the Government would find that if they treated the Corporation in the manner they were doing, and insisted on the maintenance of the hospital, the Corporation would agree to do it, but would deduct the cost from the amount of their voluntary contribution to the Goculdas Tejpal Hospital.

Mr. Roughton, a well-known solicitor, and an active member of the Corporation, and some others were for taking counsel's opinion in the matter and carrying out the requisition, if they were so advised. Pherozeshah, however, in replying on the debate, emphasized the necessity of appealing to the Government of India, and recalled the success of their representation years before to the Secretary of State in the matter of the C.D. Act. He felt that it would be unworthy of the Corporation to do anything that would bring an undeserved stain on its fair name and fame. He spoke warmly, because he felt keenly about the matter. It was natural for the European members to regard, perhaps, his warmth as excessive; but he asked them if they would not resent similar treatment, if some local body in their own country were treated in what they might consider an arbitrary manner.

The speech made out such a formidable case that the proposition was carried by a large majority. Not for the first time, did the Corporation, by accepting the guidance of its capable and resolute leader, save itself from a position of humiliating surrender, and assert its independence in matters within its province. It was, perhaps, like dashing one's head against a stone wall, but the stand taken by Pherozeshah was the subject of general admiration. Mr. Hume was particularly appreciative :

Long as it was, I read every word of the report of your speech, which appeared to me unanswerable. Of course, you will be beaten: there is no contending against a despotism. But the stand you have made is an object-lesson to the whole country, and will in its way do as much good as any Congress; and I must congratulate you on the admirable manner in which you worked the opposition.

Mr. Hume's anticipations were verified. The Government would not budge from the position they had taken up, and in October 1892, for the first time in the history of local politics, the 'bludgeon' clause was applied and the Corporation was bullied into submission to a high-handed and indefensible proceeding.

Pherozeshah's ascendancy in the civic chamber at this time was undisputed. Few proposals which encountered his hostility had a chance of being carried, and Commissioners thought twice before they crossed swords with him; they felt comfortable when they secured his support for their policy and measures. As one of them wrote, if Pherozeshah failed to be convinced about any question, the probability was that the Corporation would fail to be convinced as well. A proud position for anyone to occupy, and a dangerous one in the case of a lesser man. Be it said, however, to the lasting credit of Pherozeshah, that he never abused the power he had won by sheer force of character, ability and devotion to civic affairs. One characteristic of his was particularly notable. Though continually fighting against those in authority, he was always anxious to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. He never lent himself to bitter or unreasonable criticisms of the executive, but stood up as its champion whenever he thought it was unfairly treated. On one occasion, he publicly rebuked a close friend and colleague for hastily imputing unfairness of conduct to the Commissioner, and strongly urged the Corporation to mark its disapproval of such methods of argument. Jealous as he was of the authority of the Corporation, he was equally insistent on the maintenance of the position and dignity of its officers. He commanded their respect no less, therefore, than that of the Corporation which, as an exasperated Commissioner once remarked, consisted of a "mass of raw, ignorant, inexperienced and exceedingly self-confident members, who can be influenced in any direction so long as it is retrogressive, and doubly easily if it involves animadversion on that executive, which they look on as their natural enemy!"

## II

One of the most notable events in the political history of modern India was the election of Dadabhai Naoroji to Parliament in 1892.

By persistent and heroic efforts, the little "Black Man," as he was dubbed by the Marquis of Salisbury, had at length succeeded in effecting a breach in the jealously guarded citadel of St. Stephen's. The electors of Central Finsbury had yielded to his untiring energy and determined purpose, and to their eternal honour had returned him to Parliament as their representative. The news sent a thrill of joy through the length and breadth of the land, and in every quarter there were demonstrations of the pride and satisfaction with which the people regarded the remarkable triumph of their countryman. A public meeting was held in Bombay under the auspices of the Bombay Presidency Association on 23 July 1892, when Sir Dinshaw Petit was voted to the chair. The Governor, Lord Harris, wired a graceful message that he had much pleasure in placing the Town Hall at the disposal of the organizers of the meeting. The principal resolution was moved by Pherozeshah. He described the struggle upon which Dadabhai Naoroji had been engaged as a Seven Years' War, the opening campaign of which had taken place in the rooms of the Association in 1885, when the important decision had been reached to carry the war, as it were, into the enemy's country. The speaker recalled with pardonable pride that on that occasion he had strongly advocated the taking of Indian questions into the arena of party politics, a view which, though unsupported at the time, had since found acceptance with Dadabhai and other political associates. He claimed that that policy had been amply vindicated, and he reiterated his conviction that there was no salvation for India until Indian questions were sifted in the fierce light of Party contention.

After this preliminary discourse, Pherozeshah turned to pronounce a handsome eulogy on the political *rishi*, at whose feet he had sat with a number of other young men who had since distinguished themselves. Referring to the comments of *The Pioneer* and other kindred critics, who had never felt a generous impulse towards the people of this country, and who did not see in the event anything remarkable or romantic, Pherozeshah observed :

But it may be pardoned to us, if nurtured in some of the noblest traditions of English history, we allow ourselves for a moment to be carried away by sentiment, if we venture to con-

template with some degree of emotion and reverence the spectacle of a native of India entering that very assembly in which, in terms of immortal eloquence, Burke and Fox and Sheridan pleaded the cause of righteousness in the government of this country, where Macaulay saw in dim but prophetic vision the dawn of that day which may bring us our political enfranchisement, where Bright and Fawcett and Bradlaugh raised their voices for justice to millions of voiceless and alien people.

Pherozeshah saw in the event a cause for deep thankfulness, a practical proof of the vitality of that policy of righteousness which, in spite of many drawbacks and backslidings was still the declared and guiding policy of the Crown in India. Nothing was more calculated to stimulate and strengthen the loyalty of the Indian people than to find that the theoretical privileges which they were supposed to possess as subjects of the Queen were capable of being transmuted into facts. The speech closed with an expression of the confidence felt by Indians of all classes that, whatever the veteran champion of India might achieve, or fail to achieve, in Parliament, he would earn for himself the unstinted respect, affection and admiration of the millions whose cause he had so valiantly served for well-nigh half a century.

*The Bombay Gazette* remarked that the fellow-citizens of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji had honoured themselves as well as the member for Central Finsbury by the enthusiastic demonstration in the Town Hall in commemoration of his election to Parliament. Referring to Pherozeshah's vindication of the policy of making Indian questions Party questions, the journal said :

We may venture to point out that the admission of one member within the sacred precincts of the House of Commons after a Seven Years' War does not of itself demonstrate the wisdom of the new departure which, at the instance of Mr. P. M. Mehta, brought Indian questions within the sphere of English Party politics.

A correspondent, signing himself "Rusticus," wrote in a lighter

vein to the paper his impressions of the meeting, for which we may well find a little space :

I read all the great speeches at the great meeting to pass complimentary resolutions to Finsbury and Dadabhai with delighted wonder. Most of them were coherent; even W—— only allowed himself to drop into poetry once, with a quotation as exasperatingly recondite and inapposite as most of the flowers he culls upon Parnassus are. Mehta was confident that he was not exaggerating when he affirmed that the election of Dadabhai had sent a thrill of satisfaction through the heart of every man, woman and child in India. I was confident that he was, so I sent for my *syce* and asked him whether his bosom had thrilled on that eventful 7th July. He said that it had not appreciably. I wandered into the *chavda* of a village, where the village elders meet to discuss politics and *Kasumba*, and I asked the grave and reverend signors what they thought of Dadabhai. 'Alas! they knew not of his story.' I make Mr. Mehta a present of these results of independent research, in the faint hope that in future he will modify the exuberance of his generalizations.

Whether every man, woman and child was affected or not by the news of Dadabhai's election to the House of Commons, the depth and universality of the popular feeling could not be questioned. It found its culmination some time later in December 1893, when the Grand Old Man came for a brief spell to his native land to preside over the Lahore Congress. The remarkable demonstrations which took place on that occasion have had no parallel in our day. As Pherozeshah, in a speech delivered at a mass meeting of welcome of the citizens of Bombay and the mofussil, observed with reference to Dadabhai's landing on these shores, and his subsequent triumphal progress, "it was not the numbers of the people who turned out to greet him; it was not the rows of vehicles which followed the carriage in which Mr. Dadabhai rode; it was not the assembly of the rich and the wealthy, the educated and the enlightened, which gave to the demonstration its rich human interest. That interest lay in the fact that the artisans, the labourers and the workmen, they, their

wives and their children—all came out glad and rejoicing to see the face of the Apostle of India."

Speaking a day later at Poona, where Tilak and his friends had organized a meeting of welcome at which Pherozeshah was called upon by the audience to make a speech, he declared that he regarded the demonstrations as in the nature of the dawning of a political regeneration. It had often been said that Indians had no political consciousness in them. The reception accorded to Dadabhai in Bombay and Poona was a sufficient answer to the charge. The truth of these reflections was brought home even more clearly by the extraordinary outburst of enthusiasm, which later greeted the Grand Old Man in the capital of the Punjab. A graphic account of the demonstrations with which he was greeted at almost every station, large and small, *en route* to Lahore where he went in company with Wacha, appeared in the columns of *India* in 1894, and may still be read with interest. It may safely be said that there has been no parallel to these demonstrations in the political history of our times.

### III

In October 1892, Pherozeshah was elected President of the fifth Bombay Provincial Conference, which was to be held at Poona in the following month. His inaugural address wandered over a wide range of subjects, and was marked as usual by incisive logic and mordant humour. A large portion of it was taken up with a vigorous refutation of the contentions advanced in an address delivered some time before by Mr. Lee-Warner, an inveterate enemy of Indian aspirations. The question uppermost in the minds of people at that moment was the proposed enlargement and reform of the Legislative Councils. Mr. Lee-Warner in his address had trotted out the familiar bureaucratic slogan that social and moral reform must take precedence over political regeneration, and that the Indian demand for representative institutions was contrary to the laws of nature, and unwarranted by the lessons of history. "No representative assembly," he said, "whether of the nation or of the country is complete, without the presence of those whom in India you would describe as low castes. I cannot fill in the description in greater

detail, but I think you will admit that the healthy growth of the representative system implies a ground prepared by not merely phrases, but by the constant action and re-action of equality, fraternity and self-sacrifice, welding together a nation, before a Council to represent a nation can be thought of."

This has been for more than a generation the burden of the song of a host of bigoted reactionaries, and of even a few honest critics with cramped vision, unable to realize the truth of that simple and yet profound observation that it is liberty alone which fits men for liberty. In the speech just referred to, Pherozeshah examined the argument in the light of English history, and had no difficulty in showing that it did not support the lecturer's sweeping generalizations:

It is clear that the lessons of English history are against Mr. Lee-Warner's speculations. If England had waited, as according to him it ought to have, till a full representation of the lower classes and the masses was secured, before thinking of a Parliament, then we should have never heard of the English Parliament at all. It is unscientific, it is unhistorical to talk of not having a representative assembly at all, till only a complete one could be had. The laws of nature, as well as the lessons of history both teach us that beginnings may well be incomplete and inadequate, that too much must not be made of fanciful difficulties about the rights of minorities and lower classes, and that the work of completion should be left to time.

Fortunately for the cause of Indian reform, the political lucubrations of Mr. Lee-Warner and others of that ilk had not found support among British statesmen, and the Indian Councils Act had become law in May 1892. The elective principle had been recognized, and though its precise application to the then conditions of India had been left to the Viceroy, Mr. Gladstone had declared that the representation should be of "a genuine living character." Indian agitation had thus achieved a triumph, and though it was a minute concession to Indian sentiment, the effects produced were of the most beneficial character, and proved the opponents of the elective

principle—among whom were some staunch friends of India like Sir Richard Garth, one of the most eminent judges who have ever sat on the Indian Bench—to be entirely in the wrong. The system of nomination may occasionally give us a Ranade, a Telang or a Pherozeshah, but that it is vicious in principle and opposed to the spirit of democratic institutions needs no demonstration at the present day.

The next point dealt with in the presidential address related to the question of education. As has been observed before, the attitude of Government towards the problem has witnessed many changes. It is strange to think in these days of meticulous control, that there was a time when the State, for reasons which are not far to seek, seriously contemplated leaving the growth and management of higher education in the hands of the people themselves. The spread of primary education was trotted out as the supreme need of the hour, to which all other considerations had to be subordinated. This new-found zeal for the schooling of the masses was in reality intended to cover a sinister attempt to throttle the growth of higher education, which was turning out a daily increasing number of inconvenient critics of the policy and methods of Government. As Pherozeshah observed, under cover of fine phrases and sentimental cant, a retrograde step of the most mischievous character was being gradually taken. His views on the subject were very pronounced; he had advanced them from many a platform, and he gave expression to them once again on this occasion :

Now, gentlemen, I make bold to say that there cannot be a greater misappreciation of the problem of Indian education, and one more fraught with disastrous consequences, and more opposed to every consideration of sound policy, than to hold that primary education is the question of the day in India. It may be, and it is, the question of the day in England and Europe, where centuries have laid up a munificent provision for higher education. But in India, in the peculiar circumstances in which she finds herself, it is not primary, but higher education that is the question of the day. I ventured to advance this view in a paper read by me before the East India Association in 1867. It is now more than ever necessary to enforce that same view.

The speaker clearly realized the import of the new policy. He perceived that it was entirely premature to talk of retiring in favour of private enterprise, while Indian schools and colleges were so imperfectly equipped and endowed, and he had no hesitation in characterizing the manœuvre as an attempt to slacken and retard the progress of higher education. The address closed with a few observations on the progress of local self-government, and the desirability of giving the mofussil municipalities within certain limits a constitution based on that of the Bombay Corporation. It was an utterance calculated to enhance Pherozeshah's political reputation, and to confirm him in the public estimation as the ablest and most fearless critic of the administration on this side of India. His conduct of the proceedings was equally able, his handling of the heterogeneous elements composing the gathering being firm and tactful to a degree. The Indian Press, with one or two exceptions, was very appreciative. *The Kaiser-i-Hind* wrote :

The presidential address delivered by that *beau sabreur* of Indian intellectualism, no other than the brilliant Mr. P. M. Mehta, raised, as if by magic, the Conference from the dull and humble platform of narrow provincialism to the bright and lofty pedestal of broad and vivifying nationalism. The extremely interesting address in which he endeavoured to review the three important topics of absorbing national interest in which every province of the empire is concerned, was exactly the sort of introductory exhortation that was needed to usher in the proceedings of the fifth Conference.

*The Gujarati* was equally appreciative, if less exuberant. It dwelt with admiration on the ability, tact and judgment with which the proceedings of the Subjects Committee—the true test of a president's capacity—had been conducted, and it characterized the inaugural speech as one of the most instructive Pherozeshah had ever delivered. Altogether, Pherozeshah's reputation, high as it stood, was distinctly enhanced by the part he played in the deliberations of the Poona Conference.

## IV

If Pherozeshah was in the front rank of public men in India at this period, the position he had achieved in his profession was, as we have seen, one of no less eminence. He had never much of a practice on the Original side of the High Court, the strain and worry of which were unsuited to his temperament. His work lay chiefly in the Appellate division and in the mofussil, where his services were eagerly sought after on his own terms. His advice was constantly sought by the native princes, particularly the Chiefs of Kathiawar, who valued his powerful advocacy and able draughtsmanship very highly in the disputes which they had among themselves, or with the suzerain power. When, therefore, the Junagadh Durbar was looking out for an officer for reorganizing its judicial administration, its choice immediately fell on Pherozeshah, and the appointment was offered to him, and accepted in October 1892. The order appointing him Special Councillor to the State contained a reference to his services to the country and a graceful acknowledgment that it was difficult to get a more suitable incumbent for the office. The appointment was made for two years, during which he was to complete the reorganization of the judicial machinery of Junagadh, and the salary was fixed at Rs. 2,000 per month. It was arranged that Pherozeshah was to spend six months every year in the State, and that he was free to pursue his other avocations when he was not engaged in the work of his office.

The Junagadh Durbar might well have congratulated itself on the appointment, which carried with it a promise which was amply fulfilled in the short period during which Pherozeshah was in office. As Judicial Councillor, it fell to his lot to preside over a Commission appointed by the Nawab for the trial of some 79 persons charged with complicity in the Prabhas-Patan riots. Seldom has a State trial been conducted with the ability, patience and judicial fairness with which the Commission carried out its onerous task. In the end, 18 persons were convicted, and considering that they had been nine months in jail as under-trial prisoners, they were sentenced to light terms of imprisonment. The judgment was a model of judicial exposition, showing a power of sifting evidence and a grasp of detail

characteristic of the president. As an English journal remarked "the annals of the Native States would be searched in vain for records of a State trial so carefully and impartially conducted."

The post was relinquished after a tenure of two years. It is difficult to understand how Pherozeshah was led to accept it. There was general agreement that it was the State that was to be congratulated, and not the Councillor whom it had secured. The salary which the appointment carried could not have been an inducement to a man who could otherwise earn it many times over. The only reason why Junagadh was able to secure his services appears to lie, therefore, in the opportunities which Pherozeshah thought he had for carrying out constructive work of an important character. And he was not quite disappointed, for he was able to leave his mark on the judicial administration of Junagadh by the Act which he drafted, which laid down the powers and jurisdiction of the various courts. When he retired, the Nawab presented him with a handsome souvenir in grateful recognition of his eminent services to the State.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN THE BOMBAY COUNCIL—DEATH OF TELANG—PARLIAMENT AND SIMULTANEOUS EXAMINATIONS

1893

WE must pass over some of the events which crowded upon each other at this period. The endless discussions about the police charges, the controversy over the appointment of an Executive Engineer for the Municipality, the curtailment of the Government grant to the University, these and other matters held the public attention at the time, but cannot be regarded as of more than ephemeral interest. They served, if possible, to emphasize the dominant position which Pherozeshah had established for himself in civic affairs ; by his great gifts and devotion to the interests of the city he had become by this time a virtual dictator in the public life of Bombay. People from all parts of the Presidency sought his advice on all manner of public questions, and on one occasion, Lord Harris paid him the compliment of consulting him about the choice of the Municipal Commissioner. As yet, however, his influence in the country had not attained the height which it was destined to achieve a few years later. It was only from the Congress platform that Indian leaders could get the ear of their countrymen in various parts of India.

Wider vistas, however, were now to open out before them with the enlargement of the Councils which took place in 1892. It is true, the representation conceded was of a very limited character, and the powers entrusted to the popular element were rigidly circumscribed. But the reform gave the representatives of the people their opportunity, if only of criticizing the administration, and interest in the proceedings of the Councils became at once more keen and widespread.

The first non-official member in all India to be elected to the new Councils was Pherozeshah, who was unanimously chosen by the Corporation—which had been given the right of returning one

member—as their representative at a meeting held on 4 May 1893. Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy in proposing his election referred to his commanding abilities, and long and varied experience of the needs of the people. Mr. Javerilal Yajnik, in supporting the proposal, recalled Lord Reay's flattering testimony to the services rendered by Pherozeshah in connection with the Municipal Bill. Mr. Wacha, with the devotion of a close friend and faithful follower, added his testimony, and in doing so, could not resist the opportunity of reminding the Corporation that it was Pherozeshah who was really the author of the scheme of self-government which was adopted in the Act of 1872 and maintained in its essential features up to the present day, and that the claims put forward sometimes by over-zealous friends on behalf of Mr. Sorabji Bengalee and others in this connection were not justified by the facts.

The proposal was carried with acclamation, and Pherozeshah obtained a seat which always continued to be at his disposal, and which no one ever dreamt of contesting with him. The general opinion was that a better selection could not have been made. *The Times of India* voiced the public feeling when it wrote on the day following :

In yesterday choosing Mr. Pherozeshah M. Mehta for recommendation to Government, it (the Corporation) made what most people will regard as an inevitable choice, and it was an additional advantage that the selection was made unanimously. We shall not allow our own occasional differences from Mr. Mehta on points of public policy to stand in the way of a cordial appreciation of his capacity and public spirit. He has always been a vigilant and sometimes a severely candid critic of Government, but he stands altogether apart from the impracticable and irreconcilable school of *intransigeants* who are somewhat noisily claiming a hearing now-a-days, and who are a hindrance rather than a help to all attempts at sober and effective criticism of the administration. Mr. Mehta has found supporters and eulogists amongst all sections of the municipal chamber, and he is too broadminded a man not to see in that fact an intimation—if the intimation be needed—that he will go into the Legislative

Council as the representative, neither of a race nor a clique, but of the citizens at large.

Among the many messages of congratulations and goodwill that poured in upon Pherozeshah was one from the people of Nagpur, who, at a public meeting held on 24 June 1893, expressed their profound satisfaction at the election to the Councils of their respective provinces of such stalwarts of the national movement as W. C. Bonnerji, Lal Mohan Ghosh, Surendranath Bannerji and Pherozeshah. In communicating the resolution to the last-named, the President of the Standing Committee of the Congress in Nagpur, referred in flattering terms to his leadership in the Congress camp and the prominent position he had all along occupied in its deliberations, and assured him of the warm regard of the people of the Central Provinces, who desired to see him returned to the Supreme Legislative Council. This hope was soon to be realized.

The first meeting of the Local Legislative Council was held on 27 July 1893, at Poona, where the Government of Bombay secluded themselves for more than four months in the year. The chosen few who had found admission into the sacred portals of the Council Hall were there, eager to grasp with both hands the opportunities which had been opened out to the representatives of the people. Among Pherozeshah's colleagues were Messrs. Ranade, Naoroji N. Wadia and Chimanlal Setalvad. The right of interpellation and discussion of the Budget, conceded for the first time, was exercised by them with a freedom and knowledge, which must have silenced those scoffers who held the representative principle in contempt.

Lord Harris, in opening the proceedings, welcomed the members, and reminded them that their object was to get through the maximum of useful work with the minimum of unnecessary debate. Whether as a result of this gratuitous piece of advice or otherwise, the orations in this first Council meeting, compared to the exhausting performances which became the vogue in later years, were brief and to the point. Pherozeshah's criticisms were mostly confined to questions relating to the Government grant to the University, the contribution of the Corporation to the City Police Force, and the cost of the separation of judicial from executive functions. On all

these points he spoke with an earnestness derived from his keen interest in the subject.

On the subject of the Police charges, Pherozeshah avoided all reference to the much-vexed question of the liability of the Corporation which was then pending before the Secretary of State. It had given rise to a great deal of bitterness between the Government and the Municipality, both of whom had shown themselves unbending in their attitude. Not until the unhappy arrangement made under the Act of 1888, by which the Corporation had to shoulder three-fourths of the cost of maintaining the City Police, was modified in 1907, and the Corporation was freed from the liability for Police charges in return for taking over the full responsibility for the provision of primary education and medical relief, did the squabbles between the two bodies come to an end. On the present occasion, Pherozeshah confined himself to a few items of the contribution sought to be levied from the Corporation. He objected to the latter being held responsible for any portion of the cost of maintaining the Police for functions which did not strictly form part of their legitimate duties. His view was that, so long as the Government held that the rights and privileges which the Corporation enjoyed must be strictly construed according to the law, the Corporation should strenuously resist any burdens which were not expressly cast upon it by the Act.

The next subject on which Pherozeshah dwelt had reference to the eternal question of the separation of judicial from executive functions. Lord Dufferin had declared the Congress proposals in this behalf to be "a counsel of perfection," and they had been blessed with the approval of more than one Secretary of State for India, and had been endorsed in a closely-reasoned contribution on the subject by no less an authority than Sir Richard Garth. But counsels of perfection are often long in being adopted; what is theoretically sound is too frequently condemned as being impossible in practice. In the present instance, when all other arguments were exhausted, the advocates of the reform were confronted with the question of cost. In the speech in question, Pherozeshah briefly outlined a scheme, which he urged would actually result in economy. He would do away with the criminal jurisdiction of Assistant Collectors and Mamlatdars—who, according to him, were devoting only a very

small portion of their time to criminal work—and transfer it to Subordinate Judges. The increase in the number of the latter would be counter-balanced by the reduction in the number of the former. He illustrated his point by taking one district, and showing how the arrangement would work in practice.

This was too good an opportunity to be lost for the display of administrative wisdom, and various members of Government pounced upon details of the scheme and Pherozeshah was subjected to a mild heckling. But he stuck to his position, and maintained that the scheme was as practicable as it was sound, and while increasing efficiency would actually effect economy. During the Budget discussion of the following year, he returned to the attack and urged Government to appoint a committee for the purpose of considering the feasibility of his proposals in so far as they would affect one particular district. But the Government remained unconvinced.

In the meantime, Pherozeshah had prepared a memorandum on the subject, which he submitted for the consideration of the 6th Provincial Conference, which was held at Ahmedabad on 1 November 1893. In this memorandum, he expressed himself strongly about the evils of the system :

Nobody, who is not intimately acquainted with the daily life in villages and small towns, can have an adequate conception of the intolerable hardship which the continuance of magisterial powers in Revenue officers entails upon the people. The great bulk of the masses are rendered unhappy enough by the way in which life is made a burden, not to the rogues, but the honest folk by the practical working of the Salt, Opium, Abkari, Forest, Arms and Land Revenue Acts with their infinite rules and regulations hedging the people round in all directions; but vexatious and harassing as these laws are, they would not be nearly so intolerable if all resistance to their unjust and oppressive enforcement were not practically rendered impossible by the ingenious device of combining the Prosecutor and the Magistrate in one and the same person. Under these Acts, everything is guarded by prosecutions at every step; and these prosecutions, initiated and countenanced by executive officers, are tried by Mamlatdars and

Magistrates, who are all, again, executive officers. Those who have practical knowledge of the system are aware how naturally these prosecutions, however absurd and vexatious, end in convictions. Indeed, the general feeling about the matter is that the Mamlatdar or Magistrate, who valued his own interests and prospects, dare not indulge, except rarely, in the luxury of an acquittal.

It appeared to Pherozeshah that the real obstacle in the way of the desired reform lay not in the cost of the change, as was so often urged, but in the fact that executive officers were not willing to consent to a measure which they thought would materially diminish their power and importance. That really must be regarded as the motive power of the determined opposition which the bureaucracy has offered to the inauguration of a reform, blessed in principle by the highest authorities in England and in India. Never was a case more convincing than that for the separation of judicial from executive functions, and well might its advocates have looked forward to an early realization of their hopes. Little did Pherozeshah imagine when he drew up his memorandum in 1893, that twenty years later the question would still remain unsolved, and he would have to stand up on a platform, urging the same arguments and considerations which had been urged a hundred times before, and to which there never has been a convincing answer.

## II

The closing day of the first session of the enlarged Bombay Council was darkened by an event which cast a gloom over the city. The versatile and cultured Telang passed away in the prime of life on 1 September 1893. He belonged to the earliest band of brilliant Elphinstonians, who, having gathered the fruits of Western education, had devoted themselves to the advancement and uplifting of their countrymen under the guidance of Dadabhai Naoroji and had sowed the first seeds of a national awakening. Many great names rise before one in recalling the memory of that period of pioneering activity in various directions. In that illustrious roll, the name of Telang occupies an honoured place. As a scholar, lawyer and poli-

tician, he had won equal distinction, and his elevation to the Bench when he was less than forty, was a well-deserved recognition of his high character and attainments. His death in the prime of life came, therefore, as a personal blow to thousands of people in all parts of the country.

The news was carried to the Legislative Council on the last day of the session, and cast a gloom over the proceedings. Lord Harris expressed on behalf of himself and his colleagues the keen regret felt by all at the loss of "a deeply read scholar, a great lawyer and a wise judge." The Governor was new to his office, but his predecessor had enjoyed the benefit of Telang's wise counsel, and had learnt to respect his powerful advocacy of the popular view, particularly during the debates on the Municipal Act. His death was equally a loss to the Government and the people.

At the memorial meeting held in the Town Hall on 6 October, the presence of a large and distinguished gathering under the presidentship of Lord Harris testified to the warm regard and esteem in which Telang was held by all classes of people. Pherozeshah and Ranade as they entered the Hall were given a great reception. The Chief Justice, Sir Charles Sargent, was to have presided, but a suggestion having been made that the Governor should take the chair, His Excellency had written to Pherozeshah that though he considered it very undesirable that the Governor should preside at meetings held to perpetuate the memory of distinguished citizens, he had so great an admiration for the abilities and character of Telang that he was willing to associate himself with the public meeting. The tributes paid on the occasion by Telang's friends and fellow-workers were generous, and inspired by that warmth of feeling which his engaging personality evoked in the hearts of all who came in contact with him. Contrary to the general expectation, Pherozeshah would not speak on the main resolution, contenting himself with merely moving a vote of thanks to the president. In doing so, however, he explained to the audience with some emotion that with the recollections and associations of so many years crowding on the mind as they could not but do in that Hall and with those surroundings, any endeavour to speak of Telang so soon after his loss in the prime of manhood and in the plenitude of his powers, could

only lose itself in that bitterest of pagan cries as to 'the mystery of the cruelty of things.' The speaker recalled the occasion on which his deceased friend and he had made their first appearance, as "raw and humble recruits in the public cause," in that very Hall at a meeting held under the presidentship of the then Governor of Bombay for the purpose of forming a volunteer corps. Since then they had fought together many a battle, and their close association in public life had ceased only with the elevation of Telang to the Bench, four short years before his death. It was with a very full heart, therefore, that Pherozeshah spoke of his departed friend and fellow-worker in the short speech he made at the memorial meeting. Little did he imagine that one after another many other comrades were to follow, leaving him almost alone in his last days to uphold the principles and policies to which they had dedicated themselves.

## III

A few days before the new Councils met, the question of simultaneous examinations for the Civil Service again occupied public attention. The unwearying efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji and the small band of Englishmen whom he had inspired with some of his love and enthusiasm for India, at length succeeded in gaining from the highest legislature in the Empire the just recognition of the demand of Indians for an adequate share in the administration of their country. On the memorable 2nd June of 1893, a motion was carried in the House of Commons: "That all open competitive examinations heretofore held in England alone for appointments to the Civil Services of India, shall henceforth be held simultaneously both in India and England, such examinations in both countries being identical in their nature, and all who compete being finally classified in one list according to merit."

The fortune of the ballot gave Mr. Herbert Paul the privilege of moving the resolution, and he did it with a lucidity and persuasiveness which overcame hesitation and indifference and secured a narrow majority in a somewhat thin House. Dadabhai Naoroji was one of the tellers for the resolution, and according to a chronicler, "the House of Commons could not fail to see his intense delight on

being handed the paper recording the principle for which he had worked with indefatigable industry during so many years." The division list showed that 84 members had voted for the resolution and 76 against, the minority including almost all the occupants of the front Treasury benches.

The result was hailed throughout the country as a signal triumph of the principle for which educated India had been fighting for nearly a generation. And when the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, announced after some deliberation that His Majesty's Government intended to accept the resolution and to ask the Government of India to take action accordingly, hopes ran high in the hearts of those who had laboured for the cause for nearly a generation. The general enthusiasm received a set-back, however, when gradually opposition began to manifest itself in influential quarters against the acceptance of what was regarded as nothing more than a snap vote. Public meetings were, consequently, held all over the country in support of the resolution, and as a counter-blast to the official agitation against the introduction of a change which was calculated to strike at the root of the Englishman's monopoly of power. Bombay was not behind the rest of the country, and a crowded meeting was held in the Framji Cowasji Institute on 15 July, at which Pherozeshah presided. Among the speakers were Gokhale, Javerilal Yajnik and other prominent men. Besides the question of Simultaneous Examinations, the Home Military Charges of India were also discussed at the meeting.

In his remarks from the chair, Pherozeshah asked the audience to remember that experience had proved that whatever hopes and chances India had would materialize, sooner or later, through Parliament alone. He saw it as an augury of hope that the Secretary of State, the Earl of Kimberley, had been obliged to declare that the question of Simultaneous Examinations—which was fondly supposed to have been throttled, and to have received its last rites at the hands of the Public Service Commission—required to be reopened and re-examined in its entirety:

This is no small gain; and it seems to me, gentlemen, that it now rests with us, the people of India, to get this hope

transformed into an accomplished fact. If we will be only true to ourselves, if we will only do our own duty, then Simultaneous Examinations are soon bound to be a fact and a reality. When I say this, I am not unmindful of the circumstance that the capacity of the Government of India for delay and procrastination is as boundless as its promptitude on such matters as the Gagging and the Currency Acts is as great as lightning. But the inherent strength of our case is bound to prevail in the end, now that the question has been re-opened and the attention of Parliament fully drawn to it.

With a few other observations, the Chairman turned to the question of the Home Military Charges, showing a consideration for other speakers not often to be seen among those who find themselves first in possession of a platform. His remarks on the subject were brief and telling. He characterized the treatment meted out to India as a grave scandal. Lord Northbrook, whose sympathies were always alive, had shown by facts and figures in the House of Lords that, in a period of fourteen years, India had been compelled to pay four million sterling for charges which did not concern her. Nothing could be more eloquent than these figures, and it was as well that Pherozeshah left them to tell their own tale. There was no need to elaborate the story of the 'melancholy meanness' of which British statesmen have so often shown themselves capable, in spite of all the unctuous protestations about the lofty purpose of England's mission in India.

The English papers in reviewing the proceedings of the meeting fastened upon the admission made by Pherozeshah, "with the good sense which seldom fails him, though he sometimes does his best to hide it under a bushel," that it was necessary to have a large admixture of Englishmen in the Service to ensure the carrying out of English rule on English principles. Their comments were characteristic, and a typical passage may be quoted to show the point of view from which the question was regarded by those whose interests it affected. After remarking that the advocates of Simultaneous Examinations would not "take off their coats" for the change if they thought that it would only mean the gain of a few collectorates by

the alumni of Indian colleges, *The Times of India* went on to observe:

Lord Kimberley, weighing well his words, declared the other day that the foundation of our administration in India must rest upon that great European Civil Service which we have so long maintained. Is there to be a predominance of Englishmen, large enough to give tone and colour and character to the civil administration? If that is so, what is the use of this agitation for facilitating the admission of a few more Indian candidates? Or is there to be, as Mr. Mehta would say, merely an admixture, large, but not large enough, to ensure that the character of the Service shall be predominantly British? The question is important, for it involves nothing less than the quality and tone of the civil administration of this country.

The "great European Civil Service" is still with us in all its plenitude of power, blind for the most part to the forces that are surging around it, sullen and resentful of the changes that are sweeping over the land. How far it will shed its traditional habits of thought and its proud spirit bow to the inevitable in the new era that is now about to dawn, time alone can tell.

## CHAPTER XVI

### WORK IN THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL 1894-1895

WITH the creation of the enlarged Councils under the Act of 1891, Pherozeshah emerges into a larger arena. His activities in the Congress, the University and the Corporation had given him already a commanding position among the public men of India. But it was not until he found admission into the Supreme Legislative Council, that his brilliant intellect and remarkable powers of debate obtained their proper field of exercise, and disclosed to the public the full force of his personality.

The election took place in October 1893. According to the rules framed under the Indian Councils Act, the non-official members of the Provincial Legislative Council had the right of sending one representative to the Viceregal Council, and their choice unanimously fell on Pherozeshah. *The Gujarati* in commenting on the appointment expressed the general feeling in terms which were by no means exaggerated :

The election of the Honourable Mr. P. M. Mehta to the Supreme Legislative Council by the unanimous voice of the elected members of the Provincial Council, was of course a foregone conclusion. A gentleman whom an indigenous Government would have delighted to honour by inviting him to the State Council, whom even the most enlightened constituency would have chosen as its representative to voice its grievances and requirements, and who in a free country like France or England would have deservedly occupied the foremost position in the State has for some reason or other remained outside the Viceregal Council. . . . The whole country from one end to the other, will receive the news of the elevation of the Honourable Mr. Mehta with the sincerest feelings of satisfaction, and we only pray that he will be spared long to continue the useful and

disinterested work which his patriotic impulses have led him to undertake.

Recognition of a different kind came to Pherozeshah shortly afterwards, and a short digression must be made in order to notice it. The New Year's Honours List of 1894 contained the announcement of the conferment on him of the C.I.E. The news was unexpected, for the tin-gods of Simla do not always smile on those whom the people love to honour. As for the distinction, it was very modest indeed, but such as it was, it gave general satisfaction, and there was a chorus of congratulations from all quarters.

Here and there, some unpleasant things were said about Government for their inadequate and belated recognition of merit. Thus the *Indu Prakash* was of opinion that the C.I.E. was "a crumb thrown to the Congress party." The vast majority, however, of Pherozeshah's friends and admirers were genuinely pleased. Sir Frank Forbes Adam, the staunch municipal reformer, and one of his oldest colleagues, wrote to him from Manchester that Government was to be congratulated on having added to the dignity and lustre of the Order by the inclusion of his name. Mr. William Digby, who was doing yeoman service to this country in England, expressed himself in a similar strain: "The Order is enriched and ennobled when such patriots as you are decorated." The High Priest of the Parsis, Dasturji Jamasji Minocherji, in congratulating Pherozeshah on the election to the Supreme Council and the conferment of the C.I.E., conveyed to him the widespread desire of the priestly community to do honour to one who had distinguished himself in so many walks of life, and who had shed lustre on the class to which he belonged. The 'Athornans,' he said, gloried in the fact that they had produced a Dadabhai Naoroji; not less proud were they that a Pherozeshah Mehta also belonged to their class, and they desired to give expression to their gratification by an address which was to be subscribed to by all sections of the priestly community.

The esteem in which Pherozeshah was widely held at this stage of his career, was greatly increased by the splendid work he did in the Supreme Council. On the numerous questions that came up before that body, he spoke with an ability, fearlessness and mastery of

argument which delighted his many admirers all over the country. He introduced indeed a new spirit into the Council, and while the country applauded, officialdom was furious at the change of tone and temper in the Opposition which he brought about.

The first measure of importance, in the discussion of which Pherozeshah made himself felt, was the Cotton Duties Bill, which came up for consideration in the Imperial Council in December, 1894. We have dealt with the circumstances under which Lancashire was allowed to exploit India in 1879 by the abolition of the Cotton Duties. With the advent of Lord Ripon, a robust Free-trader, and aided by the prosperous condition of the finances of 1882, all import duties were abolished, except on salt and liquor, by the then Finance Minister, Sir Evelyn Baring. Financial exigencies, however, rendered necessary in 1894 the practical restoration of the tariff of 1875, under which everything had to be imported at a 5 per cent duty. That the Lancashire interest might not suffer thereby, Sir Henry Fowler, who was then the presiding deity at Whitehall, imposed an excise duty of 5 per cent on all cotton yarns below 30s, to which the Government of India had to yield, eliciting from the *Times of India* the remark that the forces of China had not surrendered more helplessly before their pursuing enemies than Lord Elgin's Government had done before a masterful Secretary of State. For a full history of this discreditable measure, we must turn to the proceedings of the Legislative Council, when Mr. (afterwards Sir) James Westland, Finance Minister of the day, introduced the Cotton Duties Bill. It was well known that he was opposed to the measure, and the anomalous position in which he and other members of the Council were placed, raised an interesting constitutional question. Sir Griffith Evans, a distinguished member of the Calcutta Bar, maintained that a member of the Council was unfettered in the vote he gave. Pherozeshah was of opinion that the ultimate responsibility in all matters rested with the Secretary of State and his Council, and that the members of the Government of India could not well come in conflict with the latter. This view was endorsed by the Viceroy in his speech in summing up the debate.

When the report of the Select Committee on the Bill was presented by the Finance Member, Mr. Fazulbhoy Visram, a well-

known figure in the commercial world of Bombay, moved an amendment with a view to remedying the injustice. In supporting the amendment, Pherozeshah strongly attacked the principle underlying the Bill.

That principle and that policy are that the infant industries of India should be strangled in their birth if there is the remotest suspicion of their competing with English manufactures. . . . I protest against such a policy not only in its present immediate operation, but as establishing a most pernicious precedent.

He urged the 'additional members' of the Council to preserve their dignity as an independent body by voting against the Bill. He reminded them that the existing financial stringency was due not a little to the Services having secured exchange compensation, and that Englishmen had joined Indians in agitating for the imposition of duties on cotton imports in order to meet that deficit. If after that, they refused to support the modest amendment of Mr. Fazulbhoy Visram, calculated to succour a native industry from being harassed and burdened, they laid themselves open to an ugly suspicion about their motives.

This dig at the Exchange Compensation Allowance, which popular opinion had vehemently opposed, was strongly resented by Sir Charles Elliott, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, who protested against the language used by Pherozeshah, and expressed his regret that any imputation of personal interest should be allowed in the Council. Ultimately, the amendment was defeated by eleven votes to nine, and "for the first time in the history of British rule in India, a measure was placed upon the statute book which no one has ever dreamed of defending as being promoted in the interests of the country affected by it."

In the next session of the Council held in January 1895, one of the first items of business was an amendment of the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act. It was in 1879 that the first Act dealing with certain incidents of agricultural distress and discontent was passed after an agitation which lasted for some years. The Indian Press and publicists had continually called the attention of Government to the

rigidity of the land revenue system, which, coupled with the ryot's ignorance and illiteracy, had reduced him to a condition of wretched poverty. As persistently, the revenue officials had disregarded the cry for reform. It was not until the ryots driven to desperation resorted to the somewhat unconventional method of cutting off wholesale the noses of their oppressors, the money-lenders, that the Government awoke to the realities of the situation. A Commission was ultimately appointed under the chairmanship of Sir James Caird, an authority on the subject, and after repeated attempts on the part of revenue officials to shelve its recommendations, the Government of India realized their responsibilities and an Act was passed dealing with a phase of a problem which had become acute.

Regarded as a somewhat dangerous experiment, the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act had proved eminently successful, and had been considerably improved from time to time in the light of the experience gained of its working. Several Commissions had been appointed since its enactment, and they had suggested various changes in the law. The amendment now before the Council was prompted by the report of a Commission, issued in June, 1892, which, while advocating several improvements in the Act, had expressed its conviction that a load of debt had been taken off the ryot's shoulders without demoralizing him or shaking his credit, and without ruining the money-lender.

In moving for reference of the Bill to a Select Committee, the Hon'ble Mr. Lee-Warner briefly gave his reasons for not undertaking a larger measure for the relief of agriculturists throughout the country, such as had been recommended by the Commission appointed in 1891. He was followed by Pherozeshah, who directed his attack against the limited scope of the Bill before the Council. He had fortified himself with the opinion of perhaps the best authority on the subject, Mr. Ranade, who, added to his vast knowledge of the economic conditions of the masses, had acquired as Special Judge an intimate acquaintance with the working of the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act. Pherozeshah began by conceding that as a measure of judicial relief the Act had largely answered its purpose. It had brought justice nearer to the home of the ryots, and the justice done was substantial and equitable to both parties. But, he

added, such legislation did not go to the root of the matter of the ryot's indebtedness:

The 'soukar' is not the head and front of the offence. The Commission of 1891 has pointed out that the rigidity and inelasticity of the revenue system have much to answer for. Though it is open to revenue officers to grant remissions and suspensions, and though the Government of Lord Ripon advised a policy of well-judged moderation in this respect, in practice the rigidity and inelasticity are not slackened. As the executive will not thus move, is it not necessary that there should be some provisions in the Act by which, just as there are special courts to adjudicate equitably between the ryot and the usurious 'soukar,' there should be special courts to do the same between the ryot and the rigid state-landlord?

Later in the debate, Sir Antony Macdonell stated with reference to these remarks, that measures were under contemplation for the equitable adjustment of the relations between the ryot and the Government. What has been done, however, in this connection has not been of a character to evoke enthusiasm. It is somewhat significant that a bureaucracy which poses as the protector of the masses, and has persistently derided the claims of the educated classes to represent them, has systematically opposed all attempts on the part of the latter to soften the rigidity of the land revenue system, which yields to Government twenty million sterling a year, and which is said to have turned it into the largest landed proprietor in the world.

Another Bill which provoked a lively debate was that dealing with an amendment of the Cantonments Act of 1889. The manner in which it was introduced in the Imperial Council raised in an acute form the question of the constitutional relations between the "Great Moghul" at Simla and the less imposing but more irresponsible autocrat at Whitehall. Before 1888, under the provisions of the Contagious Diseases Act, there had been in force in India a regular system of registration, licensing and periodical examination of the unfortunate women attached to military cantonments. Public attention having been roused in England to the conditions obtaining

under this system, the matter was brought before the House of Commons, which, on 5 June 1888, passed a resolution that "in the opinion of the House, any mere suspension of measures for the compulsory examination of women, and for licensing and regulating prostitution in India is insufficient, and the legislation which enjoins, authorises or permits such measures ought to be repealed." It may be mentioned that the English Contagious Diseases Act had already been repealed owing to the outcry which was raised against the state regulation of vice.

Out of deference to the above resolution, the Contagious Diseases Act was repealed in September 1888, and in the following year a new measure, the Cantonments Act, was passed in the Legislative Council, and rules were framed thereunder shortly afterwards. In 1892, the Free Church of Scotland and other religious bodies sent in protests to the Home and Indian authorities, stating that the old system was being carried out under the new rules. After the usual official denials, it was ascertained that there were some grounds for these complaints, and a departmental committee was appointed to inquire into them. The committee reported by a majority that the only effective method of preventing the systematic practices which had grown up was by means of express legislation, such as would carry out the intentions expressed in the House of Commons resolution, and which would replace the executive orders which had been abused in practice. The Secretary of State having agreed with the opinion of the majority, the present Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council. The Legal Member in charge of it had admitted at the time of its introduction that it was a Bill which had been brought forward "by direction of Her Majesty's Government with the object of complying, if the Legislative Council should think fit to do so, with the requirements of the majority of the Commission which sat on the question of the examination in cantonments."

When the Bill came up for second reading, Sir Griffith Evans criticized the manner of its introduction, and dealt at some length with the position of the Council in relation to the Secretary of State for India. He protested against the latter's assumption of a legislative initiative which he did not think the constitution of the Indian Government intended he should assume. The Secretary of State had

done so by virtue of his supreme executive control, but it was unconstitutional and in the nature of a usurpation, and if it was persisted in, it would lead to the straining of the whole machinery of the Government of India. Playfair, who followed Sir Griffith Evans, entered on behalf of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce whom he represented, an emphatic protest against this invasion of the constitutional rights and duties of the Legislative Council. He felt that if the independence of the Council was to be invaded by the Secretary of State, and the relation of its members to him was to be reduced to the level of Court assessors whose opinion must be listened to, but need not be accepted or allowed any weight in the decision of the case, the sooner the duties and privileges of the Council were defined by a new Act of Parliament, the better for all concerned.

These spirited criticisms of the action of Whitehall undoubtedly lifted the debate from the region of the common-place. But the point of view of the two eminent representatives of Bengal, though argued with considerable skill, was not quite correct. It was left to Pherozeshah to distinguish clearly between the vast and almost autocratic powers of the Viceroy in certain spheres, with his subordination to the Secretary of State in others. He started by enunciating a principle which admitted of no dispute, *viz.*, that the government of the country was really in the hands of the House of Commons, which exercised its authority through ministers who possessed its confidence. The Secretary of State had the authority of the House to sustain him, and the responsibility to carry out its behests by all lawful means open to him. August as the office of the Viceroy was, it could not be said it was independent of Parliament. This subordination was perfectly consistent with the possession of a large and preponderating measure of influence, which the opinions and recommendations of so highly placed an individual could not fail to command in the final decision of Indian questions. Pherozeshah, for once, accepted this constitutional position without any regret. He did not believe in the theory of "the man on the spot," and he regarded the ultimate control of the House of Commons exercised through the Secretary of State as a more or less wholesome influence on Indian polity.

So far as the natives of this country are concerned, we must take care not to be carried away by the bait of so tempting a phrase as Home Rule. Home Rule to us, for a long time to come, can only mean the substitution of the rule of the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy for that of the House of Commons and the Secretary of State as controlled by it. Under either rule, the country cannot always be safe against the occasional attacks of powerful interests, but after all it is safer to rest upon the ultimate sense of justice and righteousness of the whole English people, which in the end always asserts its nobility, than upon the uncontrolled tendencies of an officialdom trained in bureaucratic tendencies, and not free from the demoralising prejudices incident to their position in the country.

These sentiments expressed a political conviction born of native intuition and long experience. The wisdom underlying it has been demonstrated times without number. Officialdom in India has ill disguised its dislike of what it has regarded as meddlesome interference of busybodies functioning at a distance and supremely ignorant of Indian conditions. It has always wanted a free hand in its dealings with a people whom Destiny had committed to its paternal care. Experience, however, has shown the supreme wisdom of having some outside control of the bureaucratic machine. The question has now become one of practical importance in view of the changes which are imminent in the relations of the Government of India with the Secretary of State. A united demand has gone forth that the Central government should be freed from the control of Whitehall to just the same extent as it is made responsible to the will of the people, and no more.

After his discourse on the constitutional aspect of the measure before the Council, Pherozeshah went on to deal with the genesis of the Bill, and showed that it was merely designed to give statutory form to that which was already the subject of rules and regulations, which in practice had given rise to various abuses. At this point, he laid his finger on a grave defect of Indian legislation, *viz.*, the practice of reserving to executive authorities the power of making rules and regulations to provide for matters which ought to be

included in the Acts themselves. Under such a system, according to him, assurances and undertakings are made to take the place of definite provisions, which are either forgotten, or what is more dangerous, interpreted in all sorts of wonderful ways. The history of Indian legislation provides abundant instances—not the least notable being the Morley-Minto Reform scheme—of Acts charged with liberal intentions being shorn of all their progressive character by the reservation to Government of an indefinite power of making rules and regulations. That is why in the great constitutional changes with which the name of Mr. Montagu will be imperishably associated, some provision has been made to minimize the possibility of their being wrecked by executive interference.

The Viceroy, in winding up the debate on the Bill, deprecated the introduction of abstruse constitutional questions in the discussion of measures which in themselves excited strong feelings. For himself, he was too proud of being allowed to sit as a member of the Council not to wish to maintain its credit in every possible way, but he felt at the same time that the vote of every individual member should be given under the responsibility of doing nothing to dislocate the complicated machinery by which the empire was governed. The Bill was referred to a Select Committee, and having been modified to meet the objections raised against it, it was passed unanimously at the February sitting of the Council.

The activities of the legislative machine did not end here. It had several more Bills to grind out. We shall only notice one of them, which was the subject of severe criticism in the Council and outside, and which gave rise to an explosion of temper on the part of the Finance Member, which rendered Pherozeshah famous through the length and breadth of the land. This was a Bill for the amendment of the Police Act of 1861. Under that Act, the Local Government was empowered to quarter a punitive police force in any district which was found to be in a disturbed or dangerous state, and to recover the cost from the inhabitants thereof generally. The amending Bill sought to enable the authorities to recover the cost in certain cases from the turbulent section only, and not necessarily from all the inhabitants. It also sought to make it possible to levy contributions from absentee owners of property, when their action caused or

contributed to the disturbed state of the locality. There were two other important alterations proposed, namely, the power to levy compensation for injury caused by the misconduct of any party, and to regulate processions which were likely to lead to a breach of the public peace.

Such was the Bill against which public opinion had emphatically expressed itself since its introduction in October of the previous year. On the side of the Opposition was to be found a somewhat mixed company, which, wonderful to relate, included the "European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association" of Ilbert Bill fame. Inside the Council, the strongest critics were the Maharaja of Durbhanga and Pherozeshah, who, notwithstanding the plausibilities of the mover of the Bill, Sir Antony MacDonnell, had no difficulty in showing up the true character of the innocent-looking measure. Under cloak of redressing a wrong, it was in fact an attempt to invest magistrates with extraordinary powers in supersession of the ordinary courts of law. They were to have a free hand in singling out individuals for punishment. The guilty and the innocent were equally at the mercy of the executive. Those who lived in the disturbed area were just as much liable to punishment as absentee landlords who may be hundreds of miles away. The measure was in fact nothing else but an attempt, as Pherozeshah characterized it, to convict and punish individuals without a judicial trial, under cover of executive measures for the preservation of order. This was an opinion which was not confined to noisy agitators, but, unfortunately for Government, was shared by some of its own officers. The language employed by Pherozeshah, which raised a breeze in the Council Hall, creating an atmospheric disturbance which was felt far and wide, was, therefore, none too strong :

My Lord, I cannot conceive of legislation more empirical, more retrograde, more open to abuse, or more demoralizing. It is impossible not to see that it is a piece of that empirical legislation so dear to the heart of executive officers, which will not and cannot recognize the scientific fact that the punishment and suppression of crime without injuring or oppressing innocence, must be controlled by judicial procedure, and cannot be safely left to be

adjudged upon the opinions and moral certainties of men believing themselves to be capable, honest and conscientious . . . . Empirical and retrograde as it is, this new proposed legislation would be no less demoralizing to the executive officers concerned. I have not the least desire to speak disparagingly of executive officers, most of whom, I have no doubt, are anxious to perform their duties conscientiously and to the best of their ability. But it would be idle to believe that they can be free from the biasses, prejudices and defects of their class and position.

In support of his criticisms Pherozeshah cited the opinions of several experienced officials who had the courage to recognize the dangerous character of the proposed legislation. He wound up with the observation that it was no doubt the first duty of a Government to put down all attempts to disturb and break its authority, and the British Government had the strength to do it, but that strength was not always usefully employed in devising harsher and harsher measures, and it showed at its best when it was tempered with discrimination, tact and sympathy. The Maharaja of Durbhangā, who followed next, was no less emphatic in his condemnation of the measure, though his tone was less severe. He repudiated the necessity of the Bill, and urged the Government not to adopt the Irish statutes as their model. Criticism of this character, coming from one who could not be regarded as a professional politician anxious for a little cheap popularity, must have caused a great deal of embarrassment to the Government 'bloc.'

Then rose Sir James Westland, furious at the thought that anyone should venture to speak so irreverently as Pherozeshah had done to the idols of the official hierarchy. Sacrilegious hands had been laid on their fair name and reputation, and the Finance Member felt horrified at the idea. His perulant outburst, the echoes of which were heard for a long time to come, may well be quoted in full :

As the first member of Your Excellency's Executive Council who has an opportunity of speaking after extraordinary observations which have fallen from the Honourable Mr. Mehta, I desire to enter a protest against the new spirit which he has introduced

into this Council. I have never heard the conduct of the administrative officers of the Government, as a whole, mentioned here without admiration of the qualities they bring to the execution of their duty, and their anxious endeavour to do their work with even-handed justice. Today for the first time within the walls which have been distinguished by the presence, through half a century and more, of the most eminent of the executive officers of Government, who have contributed to the framing and the consolidation of the Indian Empire, I hear them all arraigned as a class as biased, prejudiced, utterly incapable of doing the commonest justice, and unworthy of being relied on to do the duties which this legislature imposes upon them. From Your Excellency downwards, every executive officer falls under the ban of the Honourable Member's denunciations, and I for one protest against any Honourable Member so far forgetting the responsibility he owes to his position as to take advantage of it to impugn, by one general all-comprehensive accusation, not only the capacity but even the honesty and fairness of the members of a most distinguished Service—a Service of which it is my pride to have been a member. Their reputation is too well established and too widely recognized to suffer from the calumnies directed against them. The Indian Empire itself is the witness to the capacity they show in the administration of their duties ; it would not last for one year if there were any truth in the accusations now made. I feel sure I can claim the concurrence of every member of Your Excellency's Council, in utterly dissociating myself from the remarks which have been made, and which I conceive to very greatly detract from the reputation which this Council has justly acquired for the dignity, the calmness and the consideration which characterize its deliberations.

This extraordinary outburst was quite uncalled for, and Pheroze-shah immediately repudiated any intention of indulging in such general charges or imputations as the Finance Member had read into his observations. The incident set the country a-talking for weeks together. Sir James Westland's petulant criticisms had the effect, unexpected by their author, of bringing about a keener appreciation

of the great work done by the Bombay member in the reformed Council. It was felt that a "new spirit" had indeed been at work. The frank, free and fearless criticisms of Pherozeshah were felt to mark the beginnings of a new era in politics. It was a novel experience to find the acts and policies of the Government held up in their very presence to a merciless examination both as regards their intention and their methods. It was reckoned as something to the good of the modest measure of reform which had converted the Legislative Councils from being mere machines for the registration of official decrees and fiats into assemblies where the people's voice could be heard and a little daylight let into the mysterious processes which surround Government measures. It was the recognition of the elective principle in the creation of the Councils, for which educated public opinion had fought so strenuously, that had made this possible. *The Tribune* of Lahore in its issue of 30 January 1895, put the issue very clearly in commenting on the work accomplished by Pherozeshah:

There is one voice in the Imperial Legislative Council which has struck a note not yet heard inside the walls of the Council chamber. When the Hon. Mr. P. M. Mehta scornfully spoke of the exchange compensation during the debate on the Tariff Bill, the members of the Executive Council and very high officials winced for the first time. What they had been accustomed to read in newspapers, and to find in reports of public meetings, which they never attended, had at length broken through the inviolability of the Council hall, and the strong clear voice of fearless criticism rang upon their ears for the first time. For the first time also, the public saw what stuff some of the highest officials are made of . . . . Sir James Westland unconsciously uttered a great truth when he spoke of the new spirit introduced by Mr. Mehta into the Council. Yes, there is a new spirit, not introduced by Mr. Mehta, but which has first found utterance through him. The new spirit was introduced by the Act of 1892.

After remarking that previous to the passing of that Act, every member owed his nomination to the favour of the Executive

Government and was expected to be grateful, and that pliant men were generally honoured with seats on the Legislative Council, the paper went on to utter some home-truths with regard to the Council of which Sir James had spoken with so much pride. The article ended with a warm appreciation of the part played by Pherozeshah in the evolution of the new order of things:

The voice that has been so long shut out from the Council Chamber—the voice of the people—has been admitted through the open door of election. It is a very weak voice as yet, but there is ample indication of its potentialities. Mr. Mehta speaks as the representative of the people, and not as the nominee of the Executive Government, and he is not a man to be frowned down or brow-beaten by the Finance Member or the Viceroy. Sir James Westland's protest is the outcry of the bureaucrat rapped over the knuckles in his own stronghold. Mr. Mehta deserves the warm gratitude of all his countrymen for being the spokesman of the new spirit in the Legislative Council.

It would be tedious to dwell over the passage of the Police Bill into law. It emerged from the Select Committee modified in a few particulars, but retaining most of its objectionable features. As Pherozeshah observed, some paint and some powder had no doubt been used to soften the features, and new and flowing habiliments had been thrown over the gaunt spectre. But for all that, it remained essentially a measure designed to give District Magistrates, ostensibly for the purpose of prevention of crime and for the preservation of law and order, wide and autocratic powers, which would in practice be exercised by the police on whom the magistrates had by force of circumstances to lean very largely. The Bill in its final stages had a somewhat rough passage. The thin lines of the Opposition led by Pherozeshah advanced again and again to the attack, but they left no impression on the solid phalanx that was arrayed against them. As Pherozeshah observed with a touch of biting sarcasm, on whichever side might be the arguments, the votes were certainly on the side of the Honourable Member who was in charge of the Bill. Amendments after amendments pressed by Pherozeshah, Babu

Mohini Mohan Roy, the Maharaja of Durbhangā and Mr. Ganga-dhar Rao Chitnavis, the *doyen* of the Council, were thrown out, and the Bill passed into law substantially as it stood, and fresh weapons were added to the armoury of a police notorious for its corruption.

In the record of Pherozeshah's activities in the Council at this period, a brief reference must be made to the role he played as the spokesman of enlightened Hindu opinion on the question of the restitution of conjugal rights. The English ecclesiastical law provided for imprisonment as a method of compelling a refractory wife to obey a decree for restitution. Before 1877, it was very doubtful whether such a law could apply to India. In that year, the Law Member, Mr. Whitley Stokes, the author of the famous work on the Anglo-Indian Codes, seized with a desire for uniformity, introduced the clause for imprisonment in the Civil Procedure Code, which was then being amended. A large proportion of the lower classes in India found the change very welcome, and made considerable use of the procedure sanctioned by the law. This went on for some years until the famous Rukhmabai case brought out in an aggravated form the hardship inflicted in individual cases by the enforcement of the provision for imprisonment. There was considerable agitation over the matter, and Government decided to take the first opportunity of amending the law so as to make imprisonment discretionary. Accordingly, when the amendment of the Civil Procedure Code was taken in hand in 1894, a clause was inserted in the Bill to that effect. In the Select Committee, however, orthodox Hindu opinion triumphed and the clause was deleted.

When the Bill came up for discussion on 28 February, 1895, Pherozeshah moved for the re-insertion of the clause in a modified form, whereby the Courts were empowered to order in fit cases that a decree for restitution should not be enforced by imprisonment. He disclaimed all desire to meddle with so peculiar and complex a system of social life and religion as Hinduism, as he held that whatever reforms might be desirable and necessary should be left to be developed by the action of time and education. What he sought to do was to remove an excrescence which had been engrafted upon Hinduism by an extraneous jurisprudence, and he maintained he

was representing the best Hindu opinion on the matter, the opinion which might, for instance, have been put forward by men like the late Mr. Telang. He did not agree with those who believed that "the distinguishing features of the Hindu social system as regards the relations of the sexes were distrust and depression of women." The Council, however, was influenced by the strength of conservative feeling manifested in and out of it against the change, and though Sir Alexander Miller and some other official members appeared to be in sympathy with the spirit of the amendment, the only member to support it, besides the mover, was Mr. Chitnavis, and Pherozeshah found that he was really not voicing, as he claimed, the conservative and orthodox view of the matter.

This record of work accomplished during a strenuous and memorable session may fittingly be brought to a close with a reference to the Budget debate. Under the Indian Councils Act of 1892, the submission of the financial statement to the Council provided practically the only opportunity of criticizing the administration and influencing its policy. It became an annual feast at which oratorical fireworks were let off with reckless prodigality, and like all fireworks made a momentary impression and left no traces behind. The whole thing was more or less a solemn farce, and not a little tiresome. The official members regarded the long orations as the vapourings of amateurs not to be considered very seriously, and listened with as much patience as a bureaucracy supremely conscious of its own wisdom can command. It was rarely that a Pherozeshah or a Gokhale appeared on the scene and made officialdom wince under the lash of their able and incisive criticisms. Their Budget speeches were something different from mere rhetorical exercises, and though the replies of official members were accustomed to strike a note of lofty superiority, it is not too much to say the Treasury benches were never very happy during the ordeal.

On the present occasion, Pherozeshah directed his chief attack against the alarming growth of expenditure in India. He supported it by quoting the views of past Finance Members, Sir Auckland Colvin, Sir David Barbour and others. They had practically admitted that the constitution of the Government of India was such that there was no efficient control over expenditure, and that every member of

the Council, except the Finance Minister, was not only not responsible for financial equilibrium, but was directly interested in spending money. The enormous growth of expenditure had also been pointed out in an able representation submitted in March 1894, by the Bombay Presidency Association, of which Pherozeshah was then President. In dealing with that representation, the latter observed, the Finance Member had grown very facetious over the pretensions of native amateurs to show the most distinguished Service in the world how they ought to govern India, and his mirth had been specially aroused at their pretensions to teach him how to manage Indian finance; but he would not be able to say of the views of his predecessors in office that they were the views of clumsy and pretentious politicians, though they had confirmed in the most remarkable manner the contentions advanced by the Association. And the fact that stood out prominently from this testimony, expert or otherwise, was that military expenditure was growing at an alarming rate, absorbing fully one half of the whole net revenue of the Government of India. If it was not possible to reduce it by any curtailment in the strength of the army, or any halt in the forward policy, then there was no other remedy for the embarrassment of Indian finance than to urge England and the English Treasury to be just and equitable in their demands for the cost and equipment of the British troops they supplied, which was what the Government of India themselves had urged in a despatch, dated 8 February 1879. In sharp and striking contrast to this alarming growth of expenditure, Pherozeshah went on, the amount spent on Education was just 2 per cent. of the net revenue, which was about equal to the sum swallowed up by the Exchange Compensation Allowance. Sir James might wax sarcastic over "the united wisdom of the native gentlemen interested in politics, who met at Christmas at Lahore to show us how we ought to govern India," but the facts and figures which the speaker had adduced spoke for themselves, and they justified his argument that the Financial Statement could not be regarded as satisfactory, and that the Budget was not based on principles of sound finance. Absurd though it sounded, he contended that it was possible to reduce revenue and increase expenditure at the same time:

If you could reduce your military expenditure to reasonable proportions, if you could steady your forward policy so as not to lead to incessant costly expeditions, if you could get your inflated Army Home Estimates moderated, if you could devise ways by which the huge burdens of salaries and pensions could be lightened, then it is not chimerical to imagine that you could improve your judicial machinery, strengthen your police, develop a sounder system of education, cover the country with useful public works and railways, undertake larger sanitary measures, cheapen the post and telegraph, and still be in a position to relieve small incomes, to press less heavily on the land, to give the cultivators breathing time and to reduce the salt-tax.

The speech was received with ill-disguised disfavour. It was subjected to a sharp volley of ridicule, sarcasm, raillyery and other manifestations of superior wisdom. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal was particularly wroth. The feeling left on his mind, he said, was one of absolute despair as to what help they could expect to get from a gentleman in the position of the Honourable Member. He had come to them with a great reputation as one of the ablest men in Bombay and one of the leading men in the forward movements of the time. Almost in the first speech that he made in the Council, he had launched an insinuation against the probity of its official members which had caused a shock to the whole Council, which was accustomed to think and had reason to know that the company which sat round that Board was a company of honourable gentlemen. His Honour felt constrained to ask, what possible good could arise from criticisms of such a character. One might well retort by asking, what possible good could arise from *any* criticisms levelled against a body of men intoxicated with notions of their own absolute infallibility?

It was in the fitness of things that the splendid work done in the Council by Pherozeshah should receive recognition at the hands of his countrymen. The public appreciated, as it had never done before, what manner of man he was. He was no demagogue delighting the crowd by violence of language or ideas, nor a rhetorician losing himself in mere words, nor too, a professional politician seeking his

own advancement. He had the keen eye of a great general who makes the most effective disposition of the forces under his command, and is quick to seize every tactical advantage. He was formidable in attack, and very clever at effecting a retreat from a position which was found to be untenable. Those who crossed swords with him had thus a wholesome respect for him. These outstanding traits, in which he stood unrivalled, had found their full scope on the floor of the Legislative Council, and his achievements there had evoked an admiration and enthusiasm which were remarkable. Even that great organ of reactionary opinion, the *Pioneer*, could not withhold a tribute, and in an appreciation of his life and career—enlivened by personal touches about his handsome appearance, his splendid residence and the variety and costliness of his furniture—spoke of him as one of the ablest and most eminent leaders of Western India, and next to Dadabhai Naoroji, the most intellectual man among his set.

The first of the many functions held in Pherozeshah's honour took the shape of an evening party given by his old friend W. C. Bonnerji at his house in Park Street. They were together for years in London, learning the best that English life and institutions had to teach, and while achieving conspicuous success in their profession, had placed themselves in the forefront of public movements in their respective Presidencies. Their friendship had been cemented by a close political comradeship. It was in the fitness of things, therefore, that the first public recognition of Pherozeshah's work in Calcutta should come from an old and valued friend.

A few days afterwards, a dinner was held in the Town Hall, at which Mr. Man Mohan Ghosh, another fellow-student at Lincoln's Inn, presided. He occupied at the time a prominent position at the Bar and in the public life of Bengal; his death a few years later was a great loss to the province. In proposing Pherozeshah's health, the chairman dwelt upon the significance of the movement, which had brought together so many men of different communities. They had overcome all caste prejudices and differences of custom, and had met to do honour to one who had proved himself a doughty champion of the popular cause. Mr. Ghosh went on to speak of the fearless independence and devotion to duty—hitherto almost unknown in the Councils of India—which had characterized the career

of the guest of the evening, and referred to the heavy sacrifice which a lawyer of his distinction had to make through prolonged absence from Bombay. The reply of Pherozeshah was brief and felicitous, and characterized by the modesty which comes so natural to great minds.

A much bigger function was held in the same place shortly afterwards, when the citizens of Calcutta gave a public entertainment to mark their appreciation of the services of their distinguished countryman from Bombay. The Town Hall was tastefully decorated, and on the four pillars on the sides of the *dais* were emblazoned in bold letters the watchwords of his public career—Unity, Progress, Duty, Reform. On arrival, the guest was received by the Committee, headed by Bonnerji, and conducted through the midst of a brilliant assembly to the *dais*, where an address was presented to him, signed by over 3,500 citizens of Calcutta and the adjoining districts. It referred to the success with which he had guided the deliberations of the National Congress in that very city some five years before, and which had led them to expect great things from him on his election to the Council. Those expectations had been amply realized. Pherozeshah had introduced a truly new spirit into the deliberations of the Council, and had won the lasting esteem and admiration of the country. In an eloquent reply, Pherozeshah said it was idle for him to deny how gratified he was at the demonstration of approval of the manner in which he had discharged his duties. A new spirit had indeed been introduced into the Council, but he disclaimed the idea that it had emanated from him. It was due to the reform of the Council, and he hoped that the change would be recognized by the rulers wisely and sympathetically in the cause of progress. He thanked those present for the address they had presented him, which he had greatly appreciated.

This series of entertainments constituted a demonstration which was not without political significance. Seldom had Calcutta witnessed such large and representative gatherings. In honouring him, Bengal showed that the national spirit was truly at work, bringing about a community of thought and feeling, and breaking down the barriers of race and religion. Later, when Pherozeshah was in the midst of his own choice circle of friends at the Ripon Club banquet,

he acknowledged with much warmth the hospitality which the people of Calcutta had shown him, which had made him feel more keenly than ever that he was an Indian of Indians.

On 1st of April, Pherozeshah returned to Bombay, loaded with honours, and was welcomed at the Byculla station by a large number of friends and admirers. The city had decided to give him a hearty reception and had arranged various entertainments in his honour. Public enthusiasm was intense, and there was a general desire to commemorate his services in a tangible form. Some suggested the erection of a statue; others wanted a more ambitious and useful memorial. All classes of people vied with each other to do honour to one who had come to be regarded as "the uncrowned King of Bombay."

Shortly after his arrival, Pherozeshah was re-elected to the Provincial Council by the Corporation. In view of the fact that his duties as a member of the Supreme Council sometimes took him away from Bombay, there was some talk of bringing forward a new candidate, but there being a strong feeling that he was indispensable, he consented to be proposed for re-election, and was unanimously returned as the representative of the Corporation. It was in the natural course of things, for, as a writer observed, his influence in civic affairs was so predominant that the records of the Corporation in recent years might be searched almost, if not quite in vain, for an instance in which any proposition or amendment he had brought forward had not been carried. On one occasion, when the question of the Police charges was under consideration, the Corporation had actually postponed a decision, as Pherozeshah happened to be away.

The Ripon Club was appropriately enough the first in Bombay to offer its homage. The head of the Parsi community, the third Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, presided over a large and distinguished company, and paid a handsome tribute to "the force of character, the steady aim, the zeal, industry and fearless eloquence" with which the Bombay Member of the Supreme Legislative Council had always carried on the fight for liberty and progress. Pherozeshah in his reply begged them to put a stop to his being demoralized by all those kindly demonstrations, which he himself regarded as an appreciation of the inauguration of the new era. After detailing some of his

experiences in the Council of the temper and mental attitude of the bureaucracy, he urged his hearers to recognize that the time had come when men of all races should get together and endeavour to regenerate their country, which could boast in ages gone by of great and glorious traditions.

The next scene of triumph was laid in the Novelty Theatre, a hideous structure of corrugated iron sheets, which did duty in the old days as the premier play-house of Bombay. There, on 20 April, a large and enthusiastic gathering convened under the auspices of the Bombay Presidency Association, testified to the influence and popularity of one who was by common consent the greatest citizen of Bombay. The moving spirit in the demonstration was his loyal and devoted friend and colleague, Dinshaw Wacha, though with characteristic modesty he kept himself in the background. The chair was taken by that eminent industrialist and philanthropist, the late Sir Dinshaw Petit, who, in his own quiet way, was a staunch adherent of the national cause. Supporting him on the stage were men of every community and every shade of opinion. The main resolution placed on record the public sense of "the important, valued and varied services" which Pherozeshah had rendered to India generally, and to the City in particular. It was moved by Mr. Rahimtulla Sayani, a past president of the Congress, and one of the leaders of thought among Mohammedans, in a speech full of generous enthusiasm. A formidable array of speakers supported him, including Messrs. Javerilal Yajnik, Daji Abaji Khare, Narayan Chandavarkar, W. A. Chambers, Ibrahim Rahimtulla, and Doctors Bhalchandra and Bahadurji, all more or less closely associated with Pherozeshah in the task of national regeneration. Their tributes to their leader were embarrassing in their fulness. An exasperated writer, signing himself "Englishman," was led to remark in a letter to the papers:

We have seen equally fine words used in commemorating the achievements of men whose names have lived in history. But we have never seen quite so many used all at once. We have only given our readers a few specimens of the panegyrics pronounced by Mr. Chandavarkar, Mr. Sayani, Dr. Bhalchandra, Mr. Dinshaw Wacha and others. If the late member of the

Viceroy's Council had been Demosthenes, Socrates and Julius Cæsar rolled into one, his admirers could scarcely have said more about him.

The address which was adopted reflected the tone of the speeches. It did adequate justice to Pherozeshah's services to the country, particularly his record of work in the Supreme Legislative Council. It spoke of his powerful indictment of the Police and other Bills, his lucid expositions of constitutional questions, and his masterly utterances on the Budget, which would have done credit to any skilled debater in the House of Commons or any other enlightened assembly in a self-governing country. He had set a shining example to his fellow-men, and shed lustre on the whole country. Well might the recipient of these tributes have felt that his services and sacrifices had not been in vain, that they had in fact earned a rich reward in the gratitude and affection of his countrymen in all parts of the land. *The Bombay Gazette*, in the course of its observations on the demonstrations, after remarking that it indicated one of the innumerable points of difference between English and Indian feeling that it should in this country be held appropriate to present such testimonials of esteem in the middle instead of at the close of a public life, went on to say, with reference to the term self-sacrifice so constantly used in relation to Pherozeshah :

Now, without for a moment affirming that, should occasion arise, Mr. Mehta would be found deficient in this virtue, we may remark that under the happy dispensations of Providence there is not usually any sharp conflict between the personal interests of a public man and the concerns of a state which he has at heart. Ordinarily his own advancement may proceed harmoniously with that of the great causes which he advocates. Of course, it is not always so. We may cite for instance the case of Lord Selborne or of Sir Henry James, in which the conflict did arise, and in which the immense sacrifices of personal interests had to be made. But happily, no such event has occurred in the case of Mr. Mehta. We know of no public act of his which has been prejudicial to his own personal advancement. This implies no reproach. The same

thing might be said with a few exceptions of almost any prominent English statesman of the day.

There is a deal of abstract truth in this criticism, and one can think of numbers of cases in which public interests and personal advancement have gone hand in hand without difficulty. But Pherozeshah's career in this, as in so many other respects, was altogether out of the ordinary. Once he had emerged as a successful lawyer, he permitted his public work to encroach upon his lucrative practice to an extent which few professional men would think of allowing. He was known to turn away from many a fat fee merely in order to attend some meeting of the Corporation, and it would be difficult to compute the amount of his pecuniary sacrifices during his long and busy career, leaving out of account the drain on his time and energies. A man of extravagant tastes and partial to the good things of life, he might easily have passed his days in splendid opulence, content with the leisurely pursuit of a profession in which he was able to put his own price on his services. It is noteworthy in this connection that many of his contemporaries disappeared one by one from the arena of active politics. The three most gifted among them, Ranade, Telang, and Tyabji, got lost on the Bench. With rare constancy, Pherozeshah stuck to his position as a leader of the people, and preserved to the last his freedom to voice their national aspirations. His admirers might, therefore, well be excused for the somewhat frequent use of a term of laudation which might be regarded as fairly representing the most prominent characteristic of his labours in the public cause, particularly when one remembered, for instance, that Madras had long to remain unrepresented on the Supreme Council, because its first representative, Mr. Bhashyam Aiyangar, one of the most distinguished lawyers in the country, felt himself unequal to the sacrifice of his professional income.

The Eighth Provincial Conference held at Belgaum on 4 May 1895, was the next to place on record its appreciation. Pherozeshah attended the Conference and was given a hearty reception at the station as his special saloon steamed in. For weeks Belgaum had been preparing to give a rousing welcome to the man on whom the eyes of all India were centred for the time being. All interest in the

proceedings gathered round his personality, and it was a great disappointment to the people when it was known later that indisposition would deprive them of the opportunity of hearing him.

The resolution recording Pherozeshah's "masterly services" was moved by Mr. Gokhale, then unknown to fame, but recognized by those who knew him as a young man of brilliant promise. He quoted a comparison made by a shrewd observer of men and things of the three greatest personalities in the public life of Western India. That critic had said that Mr. Telang was always lucid and cultured, Mr. Mehta vigorous and brilliant, and Mr. Ranade profound and original. Mr. Gokhale said he agreed with the verdict, but did not think it contained the whole truth. Though some people thought that Mr. Mehta's particular gifts were vigour of intellect and brilliancy, it did not follow he was in any way deficient in the other qualities. He was to a great extent a happy combination of the independence and strength of character of Mr. Mandlik, the lucidity and culture of Mr. Telang, and the originality and wide grasp of Mr. Ranade. This was praise indeed!

The address adopted at the Conference, and which bore the signature of its President, Dinshaw Wacha, gratefully acknowledged that Pherozeshah's presence had added prestige and honour to the Conference, his counsels had guided and strengthened their deliberations, and his example had inspired them with faith and confidence in the success of their cause. Reference was made to his first memorable appearance before the public, when he had stood up as the solitary defender of a discredited régime. From that time forward he had always been at his post, whenever any work calling for bold and fearless action was on hand. He had borne a leading part in the political awakening which had come about since the glorious days of the Ripon régime, and which had found its permanent expression in the Indian National Congress. Ever since the dawn of that period, he had been a conspicuous and effective worker in the regeneration of his country, and had achieved for himself a position of unquestioned eminence as a leader of Indian political thought. His command of political principles, his familiar acquaintance with law and constitutional history, added to his eloquence and ready wit, had roused the fears of the officials as they surely must have won their respect, and

had made him a most formidable opponent. The address concluded with a hope that the country would long enjoy the inestimable privilege of his leadership.

It was not until the end of 1895 that the various addresses voted to Pherozeshah were presented to him at a public meeting held in the Gaiety Theatre on the 20th December. It was a remarkable demonstration. Long before the appointed hour, large numbers of people flocked to the theatre; the late arrivals could not even find space to stand. Every inch of ground was occupied and the theatre was filled to suffocation. A large crowd collected outside, and gave a rousing welcome to Pherozeshah, who, on entering the hall, was given another ovation. Rahimtulla Sayani, who was in the chair, called upon Chandavarkar to read the address of the citizens of Bombay. The address voted at the Eighth Provincial Conference was next read by its chairman, Wacha. With a neat little speech, Sayani presented the two addresses enclosed in beautiful silver caskets. As Pherozeshah rose to reply and looked upon the vast gathering, representative of every community and section, he might well have felt it was a moment to be proud of. Year after year he had risen steadily in the public estimation, and now, while still in the prime of life, he stood before his countrymen with a career and reputation second to none in the whole land. He rose to the occasion, and delivered a speech which was rated among his greatest efforts. It was mostly confined to a slashing reply to the calumnies and misrepresentations of the Indian point of view with which the enemies of Indian aspirations sought to scotch all attempts at progress and reform. It was at once a vindication of the claims of the educated classes to voice the national aspirations, and a condemnation of the superior critics who were never tired of deriding the aims and methods of the Congress and its leaders. In particular, Mr., afterwards Sir, Muncherji Bhowmuggree came in for a castigation, which made his supporters in England and Anglo-India positively furious. The pretensions of the Member for Bethnal Green to speak for his countrymen were mercilessly exposed.

Pherozeshah prefaced his speech by modestly declaring that he regarded the addresses not so much as eulogizing his own individual motives and principles of political action, as setting forth the motives

which actuated the conduct of educated men throughout the country, the principles which guided and regulated their action, the credentials which they possessed of their qualifications, and the constituents whom they, if not scientifically and systematically, at any rate really and substantially represented. There had recently been a remarkable recrudescence of calumny, misrepresentation and resentment against all who ventured to take an interest in their country's affairs, and who were reviled as croakers of evil, shouters of sedition and revolution-mongers. Amongst those who flung these accusations broadcast was "one of our own countrymen, who, though never a prophet in his own country, is, by some occult process of metamorphosis, made to look like and pose in England as if he were really a great man in Israel, a man who hobnobbed with our rajas and maharajas, was hand in glove with our merchant princes, was foremost amongst the kings of industrial development, was a philanthropic employer of labour, and who was at the same time the sympathetic friend and patron of the zemindar and the ryot." This phenomenon, the speaker added, was not very surprising when one remembered that in the old days, people utterly unknown and of no position were received and were able to pass themselves off in social circles for princes and rajas and nawabs on the strength of a little tinsel, a gold-embroidered cap, a satin coat, or a little jewellery such as even loafers in Indian bazars affected! Such a thing was no longer possible in society, but it seemed there was still room for it in political circles. This sally at the Member for Bethnal Green provoked much amusement, and the audience roared with delight when Pherozeshah followed it up by narrating an incident in the course of a journey they had together some years before. It was a characteristic way of dealing with an opponent who was powerful with a certain section of English opinion, and whose political activities were causing at this period considerable resentment among his countrymen :

A certain class of Anglo-Indians have decorated Mr. Bhow-nuggee with a little gold lace, and he is set up as a great political oracle of 'credit and renown' and he has been made oracularly to denounce the educated classes as sowing discontent and sedition by their perpetual selfish and unscrupulous attacks against the

English in India. Gentlemen, I for one recognize the singular competence of Mr. Bhownuggree to formulate such an indictment, for I have a very vivid recollection of an incident that took place some years ago. I was returning from Kathiawar, where I had gone on some professional work, and a friend joined me at Wadhwan in the compartment in which I was travelling. He got out for dinner at the refreshment room at Ahmedabad station; on returning to our compartment, we found an English gentleman installed in it with a huge and fierce-looking dog by his side. Both my friend and myself had very strong objections to travel in such company for a whole night, and finding on enquiry that the gentleman meant to keep the dog with him, we tried to persuade him to relegate his companion to the dog-box in accordance with railway regulations. On his refusal I spoke to the station-master, which so irritated the dog's owner that very soon my friend and he came to high words and some not very choice language, and I had just time to rush between them to prevent them from proceeding to blows. As I took my friend aside and tried to pacify him, the English gentleman complained to people gathered about how utterly unreasonable and provoking our conduct was in objecting to the company of his dog. 'I never object to travelling even with natives in the same compartment,' he said with the most aggrieved air in the world. You can scarcely conceive, gentlemen, the paroxysm of fury into which my excited friend was thrown at this comparative description of the status of dogs and natives, none the less stinging because made with the most perfect unconsciousness of its insolence. I thought it advisable to take him and myself to another compartment where I tried to moderate his somewhat violent tirades against the intolerable rudeness of Europeans towards natives of all classes from princes downwards, by telling him not to generalize overmuch or take individual cases too seriously. But he was not to be consoled; he scouted all attempts to explain away the insolence of the treatment of natives by Europeans as anything akin to the estrangement caused by the exclusive character of native social and religious ways. He called to mind many of the stories on this point related in that excellent article in the October number of the

*Contemporary Review* from the pen of the Rev. Mr. Bonner. Though feeling very sleepy, I was regaled by my friend for half the night with croaking fears as to the permanence of British rule, owing to this galling behaviour towards natives, of the same character as are now denounced in the mouth of educated natives. This friend of mine, the hero of this story, was, gentlemen, no other than Mr. Bhownuggree, who has now recanted the errors of his old ways and is posing as a reformed character before Anglo-Indian audiences to denounce the folly and danger of allowing the educated classes to make perpetual attacks on and criticize Europeans in India, who, if they have faults, have them only as the sun has spots.

Having demolished Mr. Bhownuggree to the lively satisfaction of his audience, Pherozeshah entered upon a lengthy examination of the motives and principles animating the educated classes and their claims to represent the vast body of their countrymen. He paid a glowing tribute to the spirit and influence of those young men on whom the rays of Western civilization had first fallen, and who had laboured with enthusiastic devotion to spread its influences far and wide, and to rouse their countrymen from the torpor into which they had fallen. Those who urged that it was absurd to seek to adopt the radical notions and methods of the Western world forgot that the living force of a new and totally different civilization had already imposed itself in all the vigour of its unceasing activity on the conservatism of the country. It was, therefore, idle to say, Pherozeshah continued, that political agitation was unsuited to the conditions of India. On the contrary, the necessary conditions and limitations that must beset a foreign rule of so complex and unprecedented a character, inevitably involved perils and pitfalls, in avoiding which the watchful criticism and close co-operation of the educated classes could not but be most useful and helpful. The English official lived in a state of proud and sometimes contemptuous isolation, which prevented him from ever acquiring a real hold upon the facts of native life. It placed him in the hands of subordinates, and deprived his views, opinions and conclusions of the authority due to information at first hand. On the other hand, an

Indian whether educated or not, must in the nature of things intuitively understand Indian thought and feeling, where the most cultured European must lamentably fail. It had been said that the microscopic minority of the educated classes apart from being de-nationalized, was congregated only in large towns and was utterly ignorant of the feelings and thoughts of the great bulk of the people. Speaking for himself, though he did not claim he was a very favourable specimen, Pherozeshah declared he was willing to submit to an examination on that point:

During a practice of a quarter of a century, I have gone on professional business times without number. I have traversed in this way Gujarat and Kathiawar, Rajputana and Central India, the districts to the east, and a great portion of the Deccan and Southern Mahratta country. I have thus visited not only the large and small towns, but thanks to the combination of revenue and judicial functions, I have followed the camps of district officers from village to village in the remotest parts of the Presidency. I have had to appear before all classes of officers from the Mahalkari and Mamlatdar to the District Magistrate and the District Judge. I have practised in the courts of Native States, and have pleaded before Native Chiefs and their judicial officers of every degree of competence. In the course of these peregrinations I have come in free, close and spontaneous communion with all classes of clients, with the thakore and the talukdar, the tradesman and the artisan, the zemindar and the ryot, not to forget the most famous outlaw of Kathiawar of present days.

Thus it was, he continued, he and his friends could claim a more intuitive and intimate knowledge of the living forces of Indian life and sentiment than the ablest and most experienced of English officials, including even those who had deservedly won a high reputation for industry and capacity in compiling statistical catalogues and encyclopædias of every variety of information. When, therefore, critics like Lord George Hamilton said that the educated classes represented nobody but themselves, they showed an utter want of understanding of the realities of the situation. It was true, they did

not represent any class or body of people on the basis of any scientific principle, but their communion and intercourse and common nature with the mass of the people qualified them to understand the latter, and to interpret their wants, wishes and sentiments, their hopes and their grievances in a more real fashion than their foreign rulers could ever hope to do. In a hundred different ways, educated Indians were qualified by their position and circumstances to speak for and serve their countrymen of all grades and classes. It was a high and noble mission imposed by duty and sanctified by patriotism. The speaker hoped that they might be enabled to rise higher and higher to it, to guide it with unswerving loyalty, to temper it with discretion and moderation, to prosecute it with constancy and integrity, and cement it with harmony and union. Individual persons could participate in it in only a small and humble way, but the presence that evening of his friends showed that if they honestly and fearlessly endeavoured to perform what little it might be given to each of them to do, they might feel sure of the unstinted and generous support and appreciation of their countrymen of all classes, creeds and persuasions.

It was a great speech and swept the vast audience off its feet. Its conclusion was greeted with applause which continued for some minutes. It was regarded everywhere, except in the camp of rank reactionaries, as a very able, fearless and comprehensive vindication of the claims and position of the educated community. Mr. Bhowmuggree's supporters were, of course, very angry, and Pherozeshah was sharply reminded by one of them that the success of a political opponent was no justification for dragging into a public utterance the details of a private conversation between the opponent and himself, and that it was a well-recognized rule that the sanctities of private intercourse were not to be invaded to serve party ends. On the other hand, the enthusiasm of Pherozeshah's admirers knew no bounds, and for days together the Press was full of cordial appreciation of the speech and the man. From amongst a mass of remarkable tributes, Sir William Wedderburn's review of Pherozeshah's career in the columns of *India* arrests particular attention. So also does an observation of *The Indian Spectator*, which wrote approvingly of a suggestion which was on everybody's lips:

Bombay, we see, has at last fired off her double-barrelled gun at Mr. Mehta's devoted head. And great has been the noise thereof. But is Bombay going to sleep after this explosion? If there is anything in it, she ought to send Mr. Mehta to the House of Commons. That would be the best reward of his labours, and the most profitable investment that Bombay could make of its spare cash. We have always felt the need of a speaker and debater of Mr. Mehta's eminence at St. Stephen's, and should be rejoiced to see a practical turn given to the appreciation undoubtedly cherished for him by all classes of the community. A little timely organization would lead to the attainment of this truly national object.

It would be difficult to speculate about Pherozeshah's political career had he entered Parliament, as so many of his friends and followers wished him to do. There was no room, of course, in that most critical assembly in the world, for the mid-Victorian style of oratory which he sometimes affected, but his unrivalled powers of debate and readiness of speech and argument would certainly have compelled attention. Gifts such as his would have made their mark anywhere, and it was a thousand pities the Mother of Parliaments never knew the greatest political leader and debater that modern India had produced.

## CHAPTER XVII

# RESIGNATION FROM THE COUNCIL— GOVERNMENT AND THE UNIVERSITY— THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUESTION—THE BHOWNUGGREE BOOM

1896

THE strain of work in so many fields told on Pherozeshah at this period, and he kept indifferent health. The robustness of his constitution and the regularity of his habits had enabled him so far to withstand the wear and tear of an exceedingly active political career. His mode of life, careful at all times, tended to become more and more rigid as time went on. In early years, he was fond of club-life, and belonged to the small circle which constituted the somewhat exclusive Excelsior Club. He got tired of it after a time, and decided on starting an institution modelled on up-to-date lines, and with a constitution different from that of other institutions, in that it was not to be merely a coterie of friends, but was to be open to every person of respectability in society. The Ripon Club thus came to be founded in 1885, and at once attracted towards it a large number of men of light and leading in the community.

There, for some years, Pherozeshah spent his evenings, often dining with a few friends and spending a couple of hours in the boisterous game of *chaupat*, the favourite amusement of high and low in those days. After a time, he dropped out, and the Club saw less and less of him, until the "Friends in Council" dinners were instituted by his close companion C. M. Cursetjee, at which the members of other communities were often invited, and which came to be looked upon as more or less political gatherings. Pherozeshah enjoyed these functions, to which his presence attracted very interesting company. Towards middle life, however, his habits became sedentary and monotonous and came to be governed by a sort of time-table. He seldom dined out or entertained, or was seen at public gatherings. At the same time, the attention he bestowed on his

person and the care he devoted to his health became more and more exacting. To such habits of life may be attributed the good health and mental vigour which he enjoyed so long. Few constitutions, however well preserved, can prove equal, however, to a heavy and continued strain in a tropical climate, and Pherozeshah showed signs of breakdown on his return from Calcutta.

One of the first things he did was to sever his connection with the Imperial Legislative Council to which he had been re-elected only a couple of months previous. On the 26th January, 1896, he wired his resignation to the Viceroy. Finding himself unable to take any part in the deliberations of the Council, he felt there was no other course open to him but to make room for some one who could actively represent the Presidency, particularly as the Cotton Duties Bill, in which the commercial world of Bombay was keenly interested, and other measures of importance were coming up for discussion.

The resignation caused widespread regret. It was generally felt that the Imperial Council was much the poorer for the loss of a member, whose activities had evoked universal admiration. The Indian Press with one voice deplored the circumstance which had compelled his resignation at a moment when his presence was sorely needed. It was thought he would have given a bad half hour to Sir James Westland and the official 'bloc' over the Cotton Duties Bill, which so vitally affected the interests of India. Though the Viceroy and the Finance Member regarded Pherozeshah's absence somewhat coolly, and had not thought fit to consent to an extension of time for reporting on the Cotton Duties Bill, which had been urged by Mr. Ananda Charlu and Babu Mohini Mohan Roy, in order to enable the member for Bombay to place his views before the Council, the Law Member, Sir Alexander Miller, with the instincts of a chivalrous Englishman, made a graceful reference when the resignation was announced some days later. In moving that Mr. Charlu be added to the vacancy on the Select Committee on the Legal Practitioners Bill, he observed:

The Select Committee originally included the name of the Honourable Mr. Mehta, who has since, I regret to say, ceased to be a member of this Council, and therefore I desire to fill up the

place on the Committee which he has vacated. And I should like to take this opportunity of saying, speaking for myself alone, that I regret exceedingly the absence of the Honourable member, whose extreme fairness and great attention to all the business I have had to transact with him in the Select Committee have, in my opinion, made Mr. Mehta one of the most useful members that I have met at this table. I have indeed more than once been obliged to differ from him in opinion on public matters, but with that I have nothing to do at present, nor did such differences detract in the least from my sense of his legal acumen and judicial fairness on general questions.

Though ill-health compelled Pherozeshah to curtail some of his activities, he controlled the currents of public life as well as before, and so far as Bombay was concerned, there was hardly a movement which did not depend upon his guidance or direction. There were other leaders of undoubted ability and influence, but whenever any difficulty arose, they instinctively felt that his presence and counsel were necessary. The direct and active influence he exercised over public affairs was thus as great, even when directed from the hill-top of Matheran, as when he thundered in the Senate, the Corporation, or the Council.

## II

The University claimed a considerable share of Pherozeshah's attention in spite of ill-health. He took up a fighting attitude on the question of examination reforms, and strongly criticized the Syndicate for declining to embody the recommendations made in that behalf by a committee, and for trying to defy the authority of the Senate. He lent his support to Ranade in the strenuous endeavours made by that eminent scholar and educationist to afford some relief to the harassed student from the crushing burden of examinations. Though rarely coming in contact with the student world, he had a sympathetic understanding of its wants and difficulties; his outlook was not that of a pedagogue or a drill-sergeant. Again, when Ranade made an unsuccessful effort in the Senate to have the three examinations

necessary for graduation reduced to two, Pherozeshah made a powerful speech supporting the motion. He pointed out that the existing state of things had been introduced in 1879 by Sir Richard Temple who had sent round a whip and secured the passing of the proposal. It had been generally acknowledged that graduates who had passed their examinations before that change was introduced were superior to the later products of the University. According to Pherozeshah, their superiority was undoubtedly due to the system of greater freedom and elasticity such as prevailed in British Universities, and which turned out a better class of men than those whom the French and other continental systems produced, with their strict discipline and exacting studies. The Madras and Calcutta Universities, which had fewer intermediate examinations, had turned out graduates in no way inferior to those of Bombay, and had given the country some able thinkers and writers.

The attitude of the Government towards the University provided another topic for discussion. It was in the time of Lord Dufferin that the first steps were taken towards the inauguration of a policy of veiled hostility to the cause of higher education, which was regarded as the root cause of the growing unrest in the country. Confidential and semi-confidential circulars were issued to local authorities to curtail the grants to universities and colleges, and gradually to withdraw the State subsidy altogether. This policy had resulted in the steady reduction of the grant to the Bombay University, which had come down from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 5,000, and against which the Senate at the instance of Pherozeshah had entered an emphatic protest. The latter had carried the fight into the Council also, and held up the Government to scorn for the niggardly treatment meted out to the University. But these protests had proved unavailing, and the University had now been informed that it could safely be left independent of financial support from provincial revenues, and that no provision had accordingly been made for a grant in the Budget of 1896-97.

On 27 July 1896, the Senate, at the instance of Pherozeshah supported by Ranade, decided to make a representation to Government, urging them to reconsider their decision to withdraw the annual grant. He contended that although the University had

established a financial equilibrium, it was still not in a position to carry out certain essential reforms, and that in any case the contribution should not have been stopped without giving the University an opportunity to state its case. He said he knew that the Government had already made up their minds, but the education he had received had taught him that the success of an Englishman lay in the fact that he never knew when he was defeated, and he wished the Senate would not acknowledge defeat likewise. It was a more or less hopeless position, but he hoped the majority of the Fellows would regard the meeting not as one of condolence, but rather as one of doctors in consultation over a patient who was *in extremis*, but not quite dead as yet!

When the Legislative Council met at Poona on 17 August, Pherozeshah attacked with much vigour the policy responsible for the cutting down of the Government dole. He pointed out that the University was deliberately and emphatically intended to be a State institution of a very important character. The fact that the Governor was always to be the Chancellor showed the view of the legislature as to the intimate relations which ought to exist between the University and the Government. The University was not a wholly self-governing body. The appointment of the Vice-Chancellor and the majority of the members of the Senate rested with the Chancellor. The real reason of the withdrawal, Pherozeshah continued, had not been disclosed. Different things had been said at different times. It was not surprising that an impression should consequently have been created that the Government were determined to carry out a policy of withdrawal from higher education. If that were the case, he would echo the sentiment of his late friend Telang that "it would not only be a mistaken policy in regard to education, but it would be mischievous and disastrous in its political unwisdom."

Mr. Kirkham in replying to Pherozeshah's criticisms observed that the Act of Incorporation lent not the slightest countenance to the idea that the University was to be a State institution. Sir Alexander Grant, whose name Pherozeshah had so often invoked, had expressly deprecated such a notion, and had expressed the grateful thanks of the University to Sir Bartle Frere for respecting its independence, and saving it from the loss of caste which would follow

if it were to be considered a State institution. He emphatically denied that there was any disposition on the part of any responsible official in India to weaken higher education. What India wanted was still higher education, but eminent authorities like Sir Alexander Grant and Sir Henry Maine believed that depth should be pursued rather than mere extension. As regards the grievance about the withdrawal of Government aid, it could not be gainsaid that the ultimate financial independence of the University was a thing aimed at and designed to be kept in view from the very earliest period, and that the time had now arrived to consummate the end so long kept in view, so steadily pursued, and towards which step after step had been taken.

In the light of subsequent events, it seems strange that so astute a politician as Pherozeshah should have taken such pains to emphasize the position of the University as a State institution and protest against the withdrawal of Government from the control of higher education. Indian leaders had to sing to a very different tune only a few years later, when, alarmed at the torrents of unrest which swept the country, and which were believed to have had their source in the seats of learning founded by the instinctive liberalism of mid-Victorian statesmen, Lord Curzon and his advisers made determined attempts to officialize the universities. As Pherozeshah himself observed in his speech on the Bombay Budget of 1898-99, when Government contributed to the funds of the University, they interfered as little as possible with its constitution, but when the grant was withdrawn, they seemed disposed to meddle more with the University and its academic administration than they were ever in the habit of doing. For an explanation of Pherozeshah's point of view, it is necessary to remember that in the early stages of development, when private munificence could not be expected to endow the universities and colleges sufficiently enough to render them self-supporting, it was essential to see that under cover of fine phrases, Government were not allowed quietly to get out of their obligations in respect of higher education. The cause of learning had as much to fear from insidious attempts to starve it by leaving it to private enterprise, as by an open declaration of hostility. That is why Ranade, Telang, Pherozeshah and others insisted that though the Universities

were not departments of Government, they should be regarded as State institutions charged with carrying out the policy laid down in the charter creating them, and which were, therefore, to be provided with funds adequate to their needs and responsibilities.

### III

It was in the nineties that the subject of the treatment of Indian settlers in South Africa began to engage the attention of their countrymen in India and the outside world. Beginning with a few occasional acts of hostility, the South African states, British and Boer, soon began to vie with each other in the severity of the disabilities they sought to impose upon the Indian immigrant population, whose nationality they despised, but whose labour they valued. It would be a painful and profitless task to detail the various indignities which were heaped from time to time upon a class of industrious and law-abiding people whose only sin was that they were frugal in their habits. The story of their wrongs forms one of the blackest pages in the history of British Imperialism.

The Indian community in South Africa, alarmed at the growing hostility manifested towards it on all sides, organized itself for defence under the leadership of one of the most extraordinary figures that have ever trod the public stage in this or any other country. M. K. Gandhi, for it was none other than he, deeply moved by the wrongs of his countrymen, threw away a lucrative practice at the Bar, and consecrated himself to the task of securing for them their just rights as citizens of the British empire. He was subjected to hardships and indignities which would have broken most men. But he was of the stuff of which the truly great are made. On one occasion in the main street of Durban, he was kicked, whipped, stale fish and other things were thrown at him which hurt his eye and cut his ear, and his hat was taken off his head. Through the help of the police he was escorted to the house of an Indian, and when a threatening crowd blockaded the house, he had to be taken away to the police station disguised as a constable.

Such indignities and risks of personal violence were nothing to a man who could face unflinchingly all the rigours and horrors of prison-life in an inhospitable country which was but partly civilized.

He continued to fight with courage and determination. He memorialized the Colonial Office and the Indian Government from time to time, pointing out the iniquity of the legislative measures which their weakness and indifference had enabled the South African states to impose upon the helpless Indians. He carried on active propaganda work, and appealed to his countrymen in India for their sympathy and support. In August 1895, we find him writing to Pherozeshah from Durban on behalf of the Indian community, appealing for the latter's help in connection with the Immigration Law Amendment Act passed by the Natal Parliament. The letter-press on the note-paper described Gandhi as "Agent for the Esoteric Christian Union and the London Vegetarian Society!"

Later, Gandhi came personally to plead the cause of his fellow-settlers in South Africa, and toured the country educating Indian public opinion. Among other places, he delivered an address at Bombay on 26 September 1896. Pherozeshah presided, and in introducing the lecturer praised the great skill, pluck, ability and perseverance shown by the slim young man from Kathiawar, then unknown to fame, but whose mysticism and asceticism were to exercise in later years such a tremendous influence over his countrymen of all classes and creeds. A resolution was passed authorizing the chairman to address the Secretary of State for India, soliciting his attention to the hardships and disabilities under which Her Majesty's Indian subjects in South Africa were labouring, as set forth in the various memorials presented on their behalf, and imploring him to take suitable measures for their redress.

In pursuance of that resolution, Pherozeshah submitted a lengthy representation to the Secretary of State, pointing out the harshness and injustice of the various measures which one State after another had adopted for the purpose of reducing to a position of helotry the settlers whose labour had contributed to the development of the country. The sheer iniquity of the whole thing needed no demonstration. A section at least of British public opinion was conscious of the responsibilities of the Imperial Government in the matter. *The Times* in a series of powerful articles championed the cause of the unhappy settlers in a manner which did it credit. With great force it pointed out:

Our Indian subjects have been fighting the battles of Great Britain over half the Old World with a loyalty and courage which have won the admiration of all British men. The fighting reserve which Great Britain has in the Indian races adds greatly to her political influence and prestige, and it would be a violation of the British sense of justice to use the blood and the valour of these races in war, and yet to deny them the protection of the British name in the enterprises of peace. The Indian labourers and traders are slowly spreading across the earth from Central Asia to the Australian Colonies, and from the Straits Settlements to the Canary Islands. Wherever the Indian goes, he is the same useful well-doing man, law-abiding under whatever form of government he may find himself, frugal in his wants and industrious in his habits. But these very virtues make him a formidable competitor in the labour markets to which he resorts.

It is, perhaps, superfluous to observe that to the South African colonists, the tradesman's point of view appealed a great deal more than considerations of justice or humanity. They knew they were masters in their own household, and they were quick to realize the helplessness of India and the weakness and indifference of the Colonial Office. Subject nationalities had no place in their scheme of things, except as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water,' even though they could claim a civilization far more ancient than their own, and bore the proud name of British citizens. In the words of Gokhale, the history of anti-Asiatic legislation in the colonies and self-governing dominions of the Empire unfolds "a tale which no Indian can read without bitterness, and no right-minded Englishman ought to read without a feeling of deep shame and humiliation."

The question naturally arises, is the Indian a British subject in anything but the name? Is he perpetually to be tickled with high-sounding phrases about his lofty destiny, and treated at the same time as an outcast in the empire to which he belongs? The question is one, which it is obvious, the Colonies can no longer be allowed to answer for themselves. As Pherozeshah observed in his speech at the public meeting, it is pre-eminently an Imperial question:

The British subject theory would be a mockery if Her Majesty's Indian subjects cannot enjoy the ordinary rights of citizenship in Her Majesty's dominions outside India or in allied states. If the Indian can be treated as he is being treated in South Africa, he ceases to be a British subject except in name.

## IV

Towards the end of 1896, the "Bhownuggree Boom" considerably exercised the public mind in Bombay and in Congress circles all over the country. The Member for Bethnal Green was to visit the land of his birth in October, and desperate attempts were in progress to organize demonstrations in his honour, and thereby to invest him with a representative character. His Anglo-Indian and Indian friends and admirers were anxious to impress a sceptical public with the greatness of their hero. Some of them frankly took their stand on expediency, and urged the manifold advantages of propitiating him and utilizing his influence in the House of Commons. Overtures were made by them for his reception by the Congress and by the leaders of public thought in Bombay and other places.

While these manœuvres were in progress, Pherozeshah was at Matheran, where he had gone for the sake of his health, which was none too good at the time. While there, communications poured in upon him from friends in Bombay, alive to the political significance of the movement, appealing to him to come down, if even for a week-end, and scotch the whole affair. Pherozeshah was too indisposed to take any very active interest in the little farce that was being enacted, and owing to his having a constitutional dislike for communicating his views by letter, all that could be extracted out of him was an occasional telegram indicating the line of action he thought advisable. When, therefore, an admirer of Mr. Bhownuggree wrote, "one has only to inform Mr. Mehta that Mr. Bhownuggree is to receive an ovation at the North Pole, and he will follow him thither to detract, if he could, from the value of the demonstration," he was obviously drawing on his imagination.

Ultimately, despite the booming and tomtomming of Anglo-Indian journals and the clique which was anxious to damn through

the mouth of the Bethnal Green Member, the Congress and the classes whom it represented, the heavens did not fall, and Mr. Bhownuggree's 'reception' in the places where he went left no illusions in the minds of any who were not blind partisans. Of course, between the obliging Reuter and the veracious chroniclers of the anti-Indian Press, a great deal of dust was kicked up, but it is not too much to say that Mr. Bhownuggree must have left these shores a sadder if not a wiser man. The Indian public, thanks mainly to the energy and foresight of the Bombay leaders, showed unmistakably that it did not support the pretensions of his admirers about his representative character, and did not propose to take him at their valuation. On his return to England, Mr. Bhownuggree is reported to have told Mr. G. Subramania Iyer, a noted Madras publicist, that "the Honourable Mr. Mehta was jealous of him," and that the hostile reception he had while in India was due to that fact! He added that he was working for the good of India according to his lights, and could not help getting into Parliament when he had the opportunity of doing so. The only comment one can make upon this is that Bhownuggree had to thank himself for the suspicions and hostility he aroused in the minds of his countrymen.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### VISIT TO ENGLAND—THE IMPROVEMENT TRUST BILL 1897-1898

EARLY in the following year, Pherozeshah's health began to grow worse. He had been suffering for some time from an affection of the kidney, which necessitated a somewhat prolonged rest from his labours, and he went accordingly to Matheran. He allowed himself to be re-elected to the Legislative Council in April, but it was evident that his participation in its deliberations would be of a fitful character. The Corporation, too, saw less and less of that familiar figure in his accustomed place to the right of the Municipal Secretary. His absence from Bombay at a critical time when plague was raging in her midst, and when the rigorous measures taken to stamp it out were creating public alarm, was sharply criticized by some of his political opponents. Mr. Harmsworth, of the *Daily Mail*, who was touring the country, took his cue from them, and wrote to his paper condemning Pherozeshah for not being at his post at a moment of danger. Judging from the way in which he continued to control public movements even from a distance, his critics might be excused for not realizing that he was really very ill.

It was not before the pain which he suffered from became somewhat acute that Pherozeshah could be prevailed upon to call in a consultant. With that curious nervous dread which characterized him, he had so far avoided submitting himself to a proper examination. When he at length allowed his trouble to be seen to, it was found that a stone had formed in the bladder, and that an operation would be necessary. As it could not with safety be performed in Bombay, where plague was violently raging, Pherozeshah was advised to proceed to England, which he consented to do after some hesitation. At his desire, it was arranged he was to be accompanied by his close friends, Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Cursetjee and their two daughters, and by Dr. Khory, an old friend and a medical practitioner of

considerable experience. The necessary arrangements were made, and Pherozeshah left by the mail steamer on 15 May 1897. His hold upon the public was evidenced by the very genuine expressions of regret at his departure on the part of the Indian Press and his fellow-workers in all parts of the country.

The voyage was dull and uneventful. Pherozeshah was a bad sailor, and did not venture on the deck very often, confining himself generally to his cabin. He had a seat assigned to him next to the Captain on the main table, but he availed himself of the privilege only once, preferring either his cabin, or the company of the friends he had on the voyage with him. London was reached on 3 June. There, Dr. H. M. Masina, who was reading for his final F.R.C.S. examination, met the party, and the case was placed in his hands. As Pherozeshah would not entertain the idea of going to a hospital, a house was rented at Watford, a few miles from London.

The operation was performed by Dr. Frayer, formerly of Hyderabad, Deccan, who was a recognized specialist in the treatment of kidney and stone troubles. He came down to Watford with a chloroformist, a nurse and a somewhat formidable array of cases, containing instruments, bandages and other necessary things. The operation was successfully performed, and the patient was ordered to take complete rest for a couple of months. He needed it badly, and was not averse to taking it. It was a trying period for one who had such an active mind, but it did him a world of good. When he was able to move about freely towards the middle of August, the party went straight to Brussels, and thence by slow stages to Lucerne, Lausanne and Geneva. At Lucerne, Dr. Khory, who had all through taken considerable pains over the case, left his patient and returned to Bombay.

Pherozeshah's mode of life during his travels was very much what it was in his own home in Bombay or Matheran. It was characterized by the same luxuriousness and extravagance which he loved to indulge in wherever he went. He travelled with an alarming quantity of luggage, and stayed at the best hotels. He would send for a hair-dresser from the smartest establishment in the place to shave him and do his hair. His fondness for cosmetics, face-washes and powders was well known, and he indulged in these feminine

tastes to his heart's content. He affected the most expensive clothes, and was always particular in dressing for dinner even in out of the way places, where tourists love to discard some of the conventions of civilization.

With equal disregard for place and circumstance, Pherozeshah would keep to his usual habits. He would rise late, and spend his morning between breakfast and the performance of his elaborate toilet. He did not care for sight-seeing, and was indifferent to historical associations. He mostly kept his own company, and seldom mixed with the people he met on his travels. His only enjoyment was a long drive before dinner. His fastidiousness with regard to food was extraordinary, and was persisted in wherever he went. Ordinary drinking water in a strange place he looked on with horror, and he would not touch it even in places noted for the purity of their water supply. He was also particular about his tea and tobacco, which he generally carried with him in a chest, regardless of customs dues and considerations of a like character, which never seemed to trouble him. There were few things he relished more than a good cigar after dinner, when he retired to the seclusion of his room, and lay in an easy-chair with a pile of papers and some favourite volume near at hand. He always carried his Thackeray and Dickens with him, and a tattered edition of the Bible.

When later the party made a long stay in Paris and London, things were much the same. Pherozeshah mostly kept to himself except when he met some old Bombay friends, such as Sir Charles Sargent and Lady Souter, who happened to be staying at the same hotel in Paris, and who made much of him. In London, he occasionally saw Lord Reay, Sir William Wedderburn and one or two other friends. He took no notice of the great world around him, and its distractions and gaieties made no appeal to him. He preferred to spend his afternoons in long drives to the suburbs. Politics he eschewed as scrupulously as he did society and its amusements, and only once visited the Congress Committee rooms. The state of his health necessitated complete change of occupation as well as of place, and he followed the doctor's instructions only too thoroughly.

## II

When he was in London in December, Pherozeshah to the surprise of many of his friends, sent in the resignation of his seat on the Bombay Legislative Council. The step was in a sense forced upon him. In October, the Government of Lord Sandhurst inquired through Mr. Snow, the Municipal Commissioner, whether Pherozeshah was expected to return from Europe in time to take part in the discussion of the Improvement Trust Bill. It was suggested that if he could not come back in time, he should make room for some one else, as it was important that the Corporation should be represented in the Council while a measure so vitally affecting its interests was under consideration. Pherozeshah was in Paris when he received a telegram from Mr. Snow on the subject. He wired back that he would decide as to the date of his return after consulting his physician in London. The latter having advised a stay till the end of January, Pherozeshah sent in the resignation of his seat on the Council.

There was at once a scramble for the vacancy. Quick upon one another, four candidates appeared in the field, Doctors Bahadurji and Cowasji Hormusji, and Messrs. Wacha and Ibrahim Rahimtulla. A vigorous campaign was carried on, and it seemed as if the election would prove an unusually lively affair. Wacha, with that fine loyalty which characterized him, declared his intention of resigning, if elected, in favour of his friend and leader on his return to Bombay. Dr. Bahadurji and Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtulla in their turn offered to show their appreciation of Wacha's life-long devotion to the public cause by retiring in his favour, if the remaining candidate did the same. But nothing came of these pourparlers, and the man in the street looked forward to an exciting contest.

The friends of Pherozeshah, however, were led by the scramble to entertain doubts about the wisdom and the necessity of his resignation. They were influenced also by the fact that the Bill had not yet been introduced, and was not likely to be through the Select Committee stage by the middle of February, by which time Pherozeshah was expected to be back. They met and discussed the situation, and wired to Pherozeshah inquiring if he was willing to be re-elected. A

similar telegram was sent by his friend Sir George Cotton, one of the most popular of Bombay's citizens, who was then President of the Corporation. Pherozeshah having wired his assent, all but one of the candidates promptly withdrew. Dr. Bahadurji alone remained, and he and his friends quietly yet sedulously continued to canvass, now that the field was left entirely open to them. Public feeling was strongly on the side of the absent leader, however, and he was re-elected unanimously on 6 January 1898, Dr. Bahadurji withdrawing his nomination at the last moment.

There was general satisfaction that, in spite of many difficulties, the Corporation had the good sense and the good fortune to retain the services of its most eminent spokesman at a time when his vast experience and rare abilities were most needed. A demand had been voiced from many quarters that the introduction of the Bill should be postponed until his arrival in Bombay, and it was a matter of rejoicing that the City was not to be deprived of his guidance and leadership while questions closely affecting its interests were under consideration. The *Rast-Goftar*, it is true, thought that it was a sorry spectacle that the Corporation should depend upon one man and one man alone for guidance in matters of vital importance. But it was a feeling which was not shared by the public, which, so long as Jove chose to thunder, did not want any lesser deities.

Pherozeshah returned to Bombay on 12 February and was welcomed by his friends at the Ballard Pier. He appeared greatly improved in health. The operation he had undergone had freed him from his complaint, and the complete rest he had enjoyed had restored him to vigour. His return was hailed with joy by the Press and the public. The tragic events of the previous year—the murders of Captain Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst, the deportation of the Natus, the arrest and conviction of Mr. Tilak, and the measures of repression which followed the outbreaks in the Deccan—had caused a general feeling of despair amongst the people and helplessness amongst the leaders. As a commentator put it:

Divided counsels and protracted discussions, hesitancy and diffidence were the order of the day, and many were the expressions of bitter regret that the one man who alone could have

inspired confidence should have been unavoidably absent in England. Bombay without the Honourable Mr. Mehta was like the Liberal Party without its Gladstone. The parallel is exact. All the difficulties and disadvantages, which this great historical party has experienced by the retirement of its illustrious chief, were felt at every stage in this city owing to the absence of its foremost citizen. The experience was suggestive in the lessons it conveyed not only regarding the present, but about the future. His return is certain to bring back a feeling of confidence and reassurance not only to this city, but also to the whole Presidency.

The Improvement Trust Bill came on for first reading at the meeting of the Legislative Council held at Bombay on 14 February 1898. Lord Sandhurst, who presided, made a graceful reference to the re-appearance of Pherozeshah at the Council table. The Bill in its provisions was of a most sweeping character. It aimed at creating a new Bombay by means of an agency distinct from the Municipal Corporation, which, for various reasons, was regarded as incapable of shouldering the burden. The frightful havoc which the plague had wrought in her midst had laid bare to view the hideous slums of Bombay and the filth and squalor amidst which the majority of her citizens lived and died. It was like a whitened sepulchre, and when it was exposed, there was a general feeling of amazement and horror. After the inevitable expenditure of energy on finding a scapegoat everybody realized that vigorous measures were necessary in order to stamp out insanitation and disease, and the Bill before the Council was the outcome of the agitation to raise a new Bombay on the ashes of the old. By the introduction of the measure, it was sought to create a Trust, armed with wide powers, and financed partly by Government and partly by the Corporation. There were those like Wacha, who felt that a separate organization was uncalled for, and that the Corporation, rid of certain checks and restrictions on its authority and, placed in possession of larger funds, was quite competent to undertake the work. But the general verdict was against them, and the main features of the Bill received the blessings of official and non-official members alike.

On behalf of the Opposition, Pherozeshah gave the measure a general approval, though he did not feel himself competent to discuss its provisions in view of the fact that he had returned from Europe only two days before. He did not agree with those who thought it was an attack upon the constitution of the Corporation. Speaking from his intimate acquaintance with the Municipal Act, he was of opinion that it had always been contemplated that special and exceptional occasions might arise when it might be deemed desirable not to entrust the direct work of carrying out certain duties to a body constituted as the Corporation was, but that it might be found necessary to delegate such tasks to an organization composed in a somewhat different way. He pointed, in support of this argument, to the provisions deliberately introduced into the Municipal Act relating to the appointment of the Joint Schools Committee. He would have preferred it if the Trust had been called by some name which might have brought it more in harmony with the nomenclature of committees such as were contemplated in the Act. The constitution of the new body might with advantage have proceeded on somewhat similar lines as that of the Joint Schools Committee. With regard to other parts of the Bill, Pherozeshah was anxious that the ratepayers should have some knowledge of the financial liabilities involved in the proposals. He was also somewhat uneasy about the large powers left in the hands of Government, and urged that care should be taken not to make the Board a mere department of the latter. Subject to these and like reservations, he welcomed the measure, and hoped it might be the foundation for the reconstruction of the city in a way for which future generations would be grateful to the Government, the Municipality and the public for their respective shares in the inauguration of the new era.

The Select Committee, mindful of the urgency of the measure, lost no time in submitting its report, and the second reading came on towards the end of March. The debate on the motion was short and uneventful, except for a fine vindication by Pherozeshah of the part which the Bombay Corporation had played in the building up of the city. As the acknowledged leader of that body, and as one who had had a considerable share in the moulding of its Constitution he would never allow that there was anything wrong with the

municipality. In his opinion, the Bill before the Council had raised the curtain on the fourth act of the drama of local self-government in Bombay. Having briefly passed in review the first three acts, he refuted in some detail the charges of incompetence and inefficiency often levelled against the Corporation by superior individuals. In his opinion, the arm-chair critic took no account of the difficulty and complexity of some of the problems which confronted the Municipality, and whenever anything went wrong, he was ready to pounce upon it and tear it to pieces. But such criticism was dictated either by ignorance or prejudice:

The truth is that, as your Lordship has gracefully testified in your letter to that body, the Corporation has done useful and valuable work in a variety of directions during the 25 years that have elapsed since the Act of 1872 inaugurated local self-government in this city. The present Bill has become necessary, not because there has been any failure in the work or the performance of its duties, but because a time has now come in the development of this city, as in the case of all other great cities, which, growing up unmethodically at haphazard, have suddenly found themselves outgrowing their capacities and requirements.

It should not be forgotten, the speaker proceeded, that the best of Western cities had their slums as well. In London, even as recently as 1890, hundreds of thousands of people lived in a condition which Professor Huxley had declared to be even inferior to that of West African savages, and it was generally admitted that 'the dens inhabited by the poorer section of the working classes dwelling in London were a disgrace to humanity and a dishonour to that enlightened and opulent city.' Much the same could be said of 'the gay capital,' until the genius of Hausmann transformed it in the brilliant days of the Third Empire. In Bombay, their needs and shortcomings had been brought home to them by the ravages of plague, and Pherozeshah gave credit to Government for seizing the psychological moment and coming forward with the Bill. There were certain features, however, which required attention. For one thing, it was essential that the constitution of the proposed Board should be

such as to guard against recklessness, and limitations on its powers imposed so as to provide against extravagant and ambitious expenditure. It was also necessary that the Board should be provided with larger funds, as for a long time it could not hope to meet the interest on the loan required for carrying out its work from the returns of its own operations. Bombay was a city in which many imperial interests were centred, and it was but right and just that the necessary funds to meeting the deficiency should be contributed from the imperial as well as the local exchequer, and that an unlimited burden should not be placed on the ratepayers of the City. While reserving to himself the right to criticize these and other details, Pherozeshah gave the second reading a hearty support.

It was not to be, however, a case altogether of mutual congratulations and rejoicings. The non-official members were not going to abdicate their function of criticism, and there were notices of dozens of amendments on the agenda paper, dealing with various matters of detail. Most of these came from Pherozeshah, who bore the brunt of the fighting, barring occasional onslaughts on the part of Mr. Goculdas Parekh, the sturdy champion of the peasantry known as the "Father of Gujarat," and of Mr. Vijnabhucandas Atmaram, a fine type of the refined but orthodox Hindu. He was, of course, fully equal to the task, and the greater part of the sittings was occupied in arguments between him on the one side, and Sir Charles Ollivant, the Advocate-General, and Mr. Walter Hughes, the first Chairman of the Trust, on the other. The chief fight was over what are known as the bludgeon clauses, which the serried ranks of the Government succeeded in retaining substantially as they were. The sturdy advocacy of the leader of the Opposition was able, however, to carry a few amendments not altogether to be despised. His efforts received the unstinted encomiums of friendly and hostile critics alike. As *The Indian Spectator* wrote, the citizens of Bombay had reason to feel proud of his success in inducing Government to accept numerous amendments of a substantial character both in the Select Committee and at the second reading, and thus securing for them a much better Bill than was originally framed.

It was an emergency Bill, and it speaks volumes for the sense of responsibility of the Corporation and the non-official members of

the Council that they co-operated loyally in the speedy enactment of a measure which they thought was demanded by the exceptional times through which Bombay was passing. The Bill became law exactly nine weeks after its publication. The scene was laid in that very place where the reformers of the seventies had waged a mighty battle against the autocracy and extravagance of the Crawford régime. But it was a peaceful atmosphere in which the Trust was born, with none of the sound and fury which ushered in the Act of 1872. Few, indeed, foresaw the storms which were to rage round the operations of a body which thus saw the light of day amidst the blessings and good wishes of an afflicted people. And now, after a twenty years' record of extravagance and blundering, relieved by a few bright pages, the Trust is going to be handed over to the Municipality, to be managed or mismanaged as the case might be. The slums, meanwhile, are with us still in all their hideousness, and he will be a bold man who will say when the promised land will be in sight, of which most people hoped to have an early glimpse, when the Trust set out in the early days of 1898 on its great crusade against filth, squalor and disease.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A CONTESTED ELECTION—DEATH OF BAHADURJI—A HOLIDAY INCIDENT 1898–1899

Now that Pherozeshah was thoroughly restored to health, his friends pressed him to go again to the Imperial Council, where he had done such brilliant work three years earlier, which ill-health had interrupted. At first, he declined to allow himself to be elected, feeling a disinclination for long and frequent absence from Bombay where there was a constant call on his time and energies; but being urged from many quarters to reconsider his decision, he yielded at length. In the meantime, Mr. Naoroji N. Wadia, one of the most prominent figures in the textile industry which has brought so much prosperity to Bombay, had entered the field, finding it clear of the most formidable combatant. There is reason to believe that he had sounded his opponent before putting forward his candidature. He knew very well that so long as the latter was willing to be elected, no one else stood any chance of getting into the Council. His disappointment, natural enough under the circumstances, at the appearance at the last moment of Pherozeshah in the lists, was therefore considerable, and he decided upon a contest, which he otherwise would not have cared to engage in. He had already secured a number of votes, and the position was by no means hopeless.

The contest was very keen and carried on with some bitterness. The non-official members of the local Council, who formed the electorate, numbered a little over a dozen, and every vote counted. The efforts of Pherozeshah's friends succeeded at length in snatching a bare majority, which included his own vote. The result was received with considerable satisfaction by an expectant public, which, under other circumstances, would not have been sorry to see Mr. Wadia in the Imperial Council. *The Rast-Goftar*, which had long fallen foul of the Congress party and burnt incense at the shrine of Mr. Bhownugree, commented, however, in scathing

terms on Pherozeshah's action in voting for himself, suggested doubts on that score about the validity of the election, and threw out a gentle hint that the Viceroy might refuse to accept the result.

*The Pioneer* readily took up the cry, and recommended Pherozeshah forthwith to resign. It sought to make out that even his compatriots had been disgusted by his action. Apparently, it would have preferred a dead-lock, for the six members who voted for and the six who voted against Pherozeshah were not likely to change their position, even if the election were to be held over and over again. *The Bombay Gazette* brought the issue down to the plane of commonsense:

The mere fact of his standing in opposition to Mr. Wadia showed that Mr. Mehta desired to re-enter the Legislative Council, from which ill-health alone compelled him to retire two years ago, and neglect to exercise the franchise in his own favour would have been inconsistent with his candidature as well as with commonsense. In the British Parliament, members are not supposed to vote upon private bill legislation which directly affects their own pecuniary interests, though they often do so. But it is no violation of the unwritten law of party politics for a minister to vote against a motion for the reduction of his own salary or against proposals threatening the position of the Government of which he is a salaried member. Still less does it offend against good taste for a candidate for parliamentary or civic honours at home, or anywhere else to vote for his own election. This is the common practice in Municipal ward-elections in this city, and we should like to see a candidate for one of the Corporation seats on the Standing Committee, who would admit that he voted for other competitors, and left the space on the ballot paper against his own name blank! . . . It is generally understood that when a man becomes a candidate for any public honour, uses all legitimate means to secure it; and if he does not make the best of his opportunities, he is written down by his neighbours in terms similar to those which Dogberry accepted as a just description of himself.

The incident was the first, but not the only one of its kind in the career of Pherozeshah. Circumstances willed it that something like it should again take place in the closing years of his life, when he allowed himself once more to be persuaded into putting forward his candidature for a position of honour, and was only able to snatch victory by a single vote. A dispassionate view of the circumstances of the contest leads one to the conclusion that Pherozeshah would have done well if he had resisted the importunities of his friends, and stood aside in favour of a candidate who had come out on the assurance that he had not to fight the most powerful among his colleagues, whose supremacy none would ordinarily have dared to dispute.

## II

The year witnessed the loss of a public-spirited citizen of brilliant gifts and great promise. Dr. K. N. Bahadurji passed away in the prime of life in August 1898, a victim to the fell disease from which his skill, energy and devotion had rescued hundreds of his fellow-citizens. The event cast a gloom over the whole city, and came home to many, particularly members of his own community, as a personal loss. At a meeting of the Corporation held on 16 August Pherozeshah moved a resolution expressive of the sorrow with which the members had heard the news of the untimely death of a distinguished colleague. In language of deep emotion, he recalled the many services which Dr. Bahadurji had rendered to his profession, and to the City at large. He spoke of the great example the eminent doctor had set at a time of panic by starting the Parsi Fever Hospital, to the working of which he had devoted himself night and day at the sacrifice of an extensive private practice. He referred to Dr. Bahadurji's untiring energy in the cause of suffering humanity, and his zealous, sometimes over-zealous, advocacy of everything which he believed was for the benefit and welfare of the City. A brilliant career, Pherozeshah observed in conclusion, had been suddenly and prematurely cut off, a colleague whom they sincerely loved, respected and admired had been cruelly snatched away in the prime of life. Even his failings 'leaned to virtue's side,' and had

endeared the man to them, and increased the respect felt for his fine character.

It was a handsome tribute and might be regarded as a sufficient answer to the idle gossip which charged the dictator with entertaining jealousy of a man who threatened to challenge his supremacy. It is true, Dr. Bahadurji had a will of his own combined with a virile intellect, and would have proved at best a troublesome and unruly follower, if he had joined the group which derived its inspiration from the chambers at Esplanade Road from which the affairs of the City were directed. But brilliant and masterful as he was, it would be doing no service to his memory to suggest the possibility of his seriously threatening the position of one, whose rare gifts had enabled him to hold his own, and more than his own, against leaders of eminence in all parts of the land, and which had given him a dominating influence in the councils of the country. It may be admitted, Pherozeshah was not inclined to look with an indulgent eye on those who refused to toe the line on all occasions. But Dr. Bahadurji had loyally co-operated with his leader in various spheres of activity, and his efforts had been ungrudgingly acknowledged by the latter on more than one occasion, notably at the public meeting held two years before his death to welcome the doctor on his return after his triumphant fight on behalf of the independent medical profession. It was thus no conventional or insincere tribute which Pherozeshah paid to the memory of his young colleague, who, he recognized, had during his short career achieved a considerable measure of eminence, and whose passing was a sad loss to the civic life of Bombay.

### III

By way of relief from the Bills and Budgets which have so largely filled these pages, we may turn to an incident trivial in itself, but which was much talked about. In the hot weather of 1899, he happened to go to Matheran, that cool and sheltered hill, where Parsis of every description congregate in such large numbers in the summer months. Plague was then at its height and was exacting a terrible toll. There was a general feeling of panic, which was aggravated by the stringent regulations for detention, segregation, medical

examination and the like, which were put into force by a Government faced with considerable difficulties in dealing with the situation. The Hill was then under the charge of Major Collie, who was somewhat of a martinet, and inclined to be arbitrary in his methods, but who was for all that, an able and conscientious officer.

It was hardly surprising that the two men, each with a will of his own, should come into collision over such a ready source of friction as the plague regulations. Major Collie had issued an order that visitors to the Hill were to call daily at the Superintendent's office for examination, or in the alternative, might be examined by him every other day on payment of a fee of Rs. 50. These regulations were irksome in themselves, and as often happens, they were improved upon by zealous subordinates with the result that there was general dissatisfaction. Prominent visitors, among them Budrudin Tyabji, then a judge of the High Court, complained about the inconvenience and annoyance to which they were subjected, but Major Collie declined to relax the rigour of the precautions he deemed necessary for the safety of the Hill.

Such was the state of affairs when Pherozeshah appeared on the scene. As he was riding up to Matheran, a form which all visitors were required to fill in was handed to him at the spot known as 'Dasturi.' He entered up the details, scratched out the declaration regarding the ten days' attendance at the Superintendent's office for purposes of examination, and returned the form. The challenge could not be ignored. Major Collie insisted on Pherozeshah's attendance at his office, and on the regulations being observed in their entirety. Pherozeshah with equal emphasis declared that there was nothing in the plague rules posted up by the Superintendent, which made it incumbent on him to present himself for examination. He had no objection to anybody going to his place to make inquiries! He took his stand on the regulations, and not, as some people wrongly supposed, on a pass which enabled him and his family to travel throughout the Presidency without being subjected to detention or surveillance. A long correspondence ensued, and as may be readily imagined, it was not Major Collie who scored in this duel of words. Pherozeshah carried the day, and Major Collie found himself powerless to enforce his orders.

The matter did not end there. Pherozeshah wrote a strong letter of remonstrance to the Plague Commissioner, who hastened to express "official regrets," and gave an assurance that instructions had been issued to prevent a recurrence of the trouble and annoyance to which the visitors to Matheran had been subjected. Pherozeshah also wrote to the Private Secretary to the Governor, and sent the whole correspondence to the Press for publication. Thereupon, a great many people came out to give vent to their indignation, and the unfortunate Superintendent, who had had no opportunity of placing his own version before the public, got a rough handling in the papers. This was too much for the *Times of India*, then under the editorship of Mr. Lovat Fraser, a brilliant writer, but a confirmed and bigoted opponent of Indian aspirations. In a scathing article, the paper dealt with the merits of the controversy, and charged Pherozeshah with having "allowed himself to be betrayed, in his letter to the Governor, with serious misstatements, more often into significant omissions of salient facts, and more than once into quotations which do not err on the side of ingenuousness." It condemned the loose talk about drawing a line of distinction between prominent citizens and those in a lower grade of society, and inquired where the demarcation was to be made. Were they to stop short at gentlemen who had climbed to the dizzy height of a seat in the Viceregal Council? The article went on to say that Mr. Mehta's lurid pictures of the miseries attendant upon the registration of names were largely the products of his own exuberant imagination, and observed in conclusion :

The interests of the public demand that the task of excluding plague from our health resorts should receive even more consideration than the dignity of members of Council. It is unfortunate that Mr. Mehta's own trivial grievances should have so large a place in his interest in plague matters. Still more lamentable is it that he should have found a prominent Government official ready to accept his ex parte statements untested, and by plain implication to condemn a conscientious officer unheard. But we still find room for the hope that when the Bombay Government sets itself to deal with this question, it will take steps to remove

the impression which has got abroad that it will not stand by its own orders regarding plague, and will abandon its officers to the first plausible person who heads an attack upon them.

This outburst provoked a sharp reply from Pherozeshah, containing insinuations concerning the origin and authorship of the article, which, he suggested, must have been inspired by Dr. Collie himself. Exception was taken by the editor to these passages as violating the well-established rule of English journalism that the personality of the writer of an editorial article should be kept out of controversy. As Pherozeshah would not consent to leaving out the offending portions, the *Times of India* declined to publish the letter, and hoped its readers would not be inconsolable at the exclusion of a communication which extended to two columns, and ended by threatening a second. Pherozeshah passed on the correspondence to *The Bombay Gazette*, whereupon there was a further exchange of recriminations and personalities.

The incident is noteworthy as showing the mettle of the man. He tolerated no nonsense. While other people protested and sank into silence, Pherozeshah returned again and again to the attack, until he had exhausted all the weapons in his armoury. Some years before, when the authorities at Mahableshwar shut the door in the face of Indian visitors, and debarred them from the use of the tennis-courts and the library, largely endowed by the subscriptions of Indians, Pherozeshah promptly challenged their right to do so, and made things so uncomfortable for them that they had to abandon the courts. His spirited attack on the caste barriers set up by the white Brahmin in this country was the topic of the hour on the Hill. The echoes of the controversy were even heard in Bombay, and gave some people an opportunity of criticizing the troublesome visitor, and moralizing on the relations between the two races. Other instances might be cited. When the Bombay Government on one occasion paid no attention to the representations of the Corporation, Pherozeshah prevailed upon it to appeal to the Imperial Government, and when the latter upheld the decision of their subordinate, the issue was carried to the Secretary of State for India and pressed home till it was brought to a satisfactory conclusion. When Lord

Sandhurst as President of the Council disallowed a question concerning one of the Kathiawar states, Pherozeshah did not hesitate to challenge the ruling and approach the Government of India. When the Plague Committee appointed by the Government of Bombay played fast and loose with the money of the Corporation without rendering proper accounts, he threatened that no further advances would be made till all accounts of the sums allocated up to date were settled. During his strenuous career, he provoked many jealousies, made many enemies. Harsh things were thought and said of him. But no opponent, however bitter, lightly ventured to cross swords with him, or failed to recognize that the formidable Bombay leader had a masterful personality, and that it was no mere gift of tongue or intellectual suppleness that raised him so immeasurably above his fellows.

## CHAPTER XX

### PHEROZESHAH AND GOKHALE—THE LAND REVENUE BILL 1900–1901

TOWARDS the end of 1900, Pherozeshah's health again compelled him to consider the question of his resignation from the Imperial Council. He was at Matheran in December, when he was attacked by fever. He wired for leave of absence from the Council, and received the reply that the Viceroy regretted to hear of his illness, but feared it would be impossible to exempt him, as desired, from attendance until the second or third week in January, seeing that important committee work would commence before then. He was asked, therefore, to endeavour to be in Calcutta for the meeting fixed for 4 January.

Pherozeshah at once came down, but his doctors would not let him undertake the journey to Calcutta immediately, and he had to put off his departure till 9 January, when he left Bombay. After a fortnight in Calcutta, he returned, hoping to go back in time for the active work of the session. Some days afterwards, the Secretary in the Legislative Department wrote to him, pointing out that it was an invariable practice to ask for leave in advance, and that it was desirable that every member of the Council must be in a position to give regular attendance during his period of office. In reply, Pherozeshah explained the circumstances of his absence on the occasions referred to, agreed that it was the duty of a member to attend regularly, and stated that he considered it a privilege to serve under a President like Lord Curzon; but his health had become so uncertain, that he felt it incumbent on him to make room for someone who could prove more energetic. He tendered his resignation, therefore, with an acknowledgment of the many acts of courtesy he had received at the hands of the Viceroy. In accepting the resignation, Pherozeshah was informed that Lord Curzon greatly regretted to hear of the circumstances which rendered it impossible for the

honourable member adequately to perform the duties of attendance in the Imperial Council, where it had always been a pleasure to see him at the table.

The question of succession arose. If there was one man in all India capable of wearing the mantle, it was Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and he sought the aid of Pherozeshah for stepping into the vacancy. In a letter which he wrote to his leader on 15 January 1901—a human document of considerable interest—he laid bare his hopes and aspirations. He spoke of his impending retirement from the Fergusson College, to which he had dedicated the best years of his youth, and of his intention to devote the rest of his life to political work in India and in England. He felt that unless young men came forward to devote all their time and energies to public work in the spirit in which Dadabhai Naoroji had been working for fifty years, not only was much real progress impossible, but even the ground which had already been gained was in danger of being lost. His wife's death had destroyed the principal tie which bound him to family life and a settled home, and he could now carry, without much effort, into the field of politics the devotion with which he had been working for his college. He had built up for himself a small income of about Rs. 125 a month, which, with his monthly pension of Rs. 20 from the College, was enough to keep him in comfort. What he wanted now was a chance of making himself useful to his country. Of course everyone would be sincerely pleased, he added, if Pherozeshah continued to represent Bombay in the Supreme Council as long as health and energy were vouchsafed to him. His great talents and his unique record placed him absolutely beyond the reach of competition. But, it was rumoured, he was shortly going to retire from the Council. On personal grounds, Mr. Gokhale said he would have wished the resignation to come later:

I was hoping that you would, even if you did not stand for a fresh election, at any rate complete your present term, which does not expire till the middle of 1902; that during the time I might show some useful work in the Local Council, so that when you retired you might consider me as not quite the least deserving among those who are working for public good in this Presidency

at a good, respectful distance behind you. Everyone feels—I state what I honestly think—that on the score of gifts, natural and acquired, on the score of prestige, on the score of those numerous qualities which are indispensable in a political leader, there is no equalising you, or even coming near you.

The same could not be said, of course, of the men who aspired to succeed him, and there being little difference between the qualifications of the various candidates, Gokhale asked for sympathy and encouragement. He was conscious that he was too young for the position, but the fierce mental anguish which he had had to endure since 1897 (when he had been led to make some allegations in England with regard to the manner in which plague regulations had been enforced in Poona, and had publicly to withdraw the charges and admit their baselessness), had made him older in judgment and experience. In any case, it was not wholly a disadvantage that he would begin the new career at a comparatively early age. He begged to assure Pherozeshah it was no mere personal ambition which was urging him to seek the honour. His reasons were different:

In 1897, when a perfect storm of fierce criticism broke over my head in connection with my unhappy share in the incidents of that year, nothing wounded me deeper than ——'s denunciation of me in the House of Commons as a 'despicable perjurer.' The words burnt into my heart, and the night I read them, I made up my mind to devote my life, as soon as I was free from my pledge, to the furtherance of our political cause in England, to which I had, without meaning it, done such serious injury. And for this work, a brief period of membership of the Viceregal Council will be very useful. The painful affair of 1897 will perhaps be brought up against me again and again, but the testimony of Lord Sandhurst himself, and my membership of the Bombay and Supreme Councils, subsequent to that incident, will go a long way towards silencing my critics. The English work is dear to my heart also for the reason that it will please Sir W. Wedderburn, Mr. Hume and Mr. Dadabhai, on whom I was instrumental in bringing humiliation four years ago.

He concluded by saying he had written frankly and without reserve, and he hoped he would not be misunderstood. He already owed much to Pherozeshah in public life, and he felt he might lay bare to the latter the aspirations as well as the wounds of his heart without being repulsed for doing so.

With the support of Pherozeshah and a few other friends, including Mr. (now Sir) T. J. Bennett of *The Times of India*, Gokhale was elected to the vacancy in April. At one time, Mr. Bomanji Petit and Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtulla thought of contesting the seat, but they were persuaded to withdraw, and the election was unanimous. A happier choice could not have been made. If it was Pherozeshah who introduced a new spirit into the Council Chamber, and taught his countrymen to stand up and speak up like men, it was Gokhale who gave them their first lessons in constructive statesmanship, and paved the way for the enlargement of their rights and liberties. Each was a pioneer in his own way, and together they forged the weapon which in the fulness of time was to win for India the recognition of her right to self-government and equal partnership within the Empire.

## II

If Pherozeshah expected that the resignation of his seat in the Imperial Council meant a period of comparative ease for him, he was soon to be disillusioned. In the middle of the year, a storm of unprecedented violence broke over the Presidency, and threw it into a state of considerable excitement. From the secluded heights of Mahableshwar, an 'innocent little Bill' was quietly launched into existence, calculated to effect far-reaching changes in the land revenue system of the Presidency. As its real character came to be recognized, an agitation was started such as has not often been seen in this Presidency.

Under the Bombay Land Revenue Code of 1879, land when brought under survey settlement, was to be held and occupied "in perpetuity, conditionally on the payment of the amounts due on account of the land revenue for the same," and the right of occupancy was declared to be a heritable and transferable property,

subject to certain provisions, and could immediately pass to the person whose agreement to become occupant was accepted by the Collector. Under the guise of protecting the 'ryot' from the clutches of the money-lender, the Bombay Land Revenue Code Amendment Bill sought to do away with this right of alienation and arm the executive with powers to grant land forfeited to the Crown on such terms *and for such periods* as the Collector might prescribe. The authors of the Bill vehemently protested that their only object was to protect the poor ignorant ryot against the rapacity of the *saukar*, and they denounced their opponents as ignorant ill-informed critics, who had allowed themselves to be made the tools of the money-lending classes. With equal vehemence, the leaders of the agitation declared that the real object of the measure was to drive in the thin end of the wedge, and to establish state landlordism by degrees. Otherwise, where was the necessity of reducing the ryots to the status of short-term tenants, assuming even that it was desirable to restrict their rights of transfer?

The controversy raged long and furiously. Among other demonstrations of popular feeling, a crowded meeting was held in the Town Hall on the 27th July, which was attended by 700 delegates from the mofussil. It was presided over by Pherozeshah, who, as may be readily imagined, was among the strongest opponents of the Bill, the real drift of which he had divined at once. He was accorded an enthusiastic reception by the vast audience. In his speech from the chair, he gave a vigorous exposition of the policy underlying the measure, handling his facts and arguments with his usual skill. A damaging case was made out by him and the various speakers who followed. Resolutions were passed, expressive of the general feeling in regard to the Bill, and the necessity of giving the public sufficient time for opinion and criticism. The indignant sponsors of the Bill replied by denouncing the organizers of the meeting, ridiculing the audience, and condemning the "inflammatory oratory" indulged in on the occasion.

It was thus in an atmosphere surcharged with feeling that the Council met at Poona to go through the solemn farce of reading the Bill a second time. The official spokesmen seemed to be in a temper, and the tone and tenor of their speeches were not calculated to

contribute towards a dispassionate discussion of the questions at issue. The Member in charge of the Bill started by remarking that Government would have welcomed real criticism, but no reasonable man or body of men could be influenced by speech and writing, which, however vigorous in language, were entirely beside the point. Government expected those who took the part of leaders of public opinion to adhere to the first principles of reasoning! After this pleasant reference to himself and his political associates, what could Pherozeshah do, when he rose to move an amendment, but "seek help and consolation in the reflection that human nature is so constituted, that in a controversy, you are always convinced that your opponents are always wanting in the very elements of reasoning if you do not fall in with their views?"

The amendment sought to put off the evil day by referring the Bill for opinion to various officials, associations and individuals. It was moved in a speech which dealt with merciless logic with all the arguments advanced in favour of the measure. The mover did not mince his words. In his opinion, the sinister object of the Bill was to go back upon the solemn adjustment of rights sanctioned by legislation years ago.

From amongst a certain confusion in the use of the words 'waste, unoccupied and forfeited lands,' the intention of the Bill shoots out clear. It is to be a declaratory Act, establishing the absolute right of the State as sole landlord of all soil in the Presidency. Government seem to be taking a lesson from the experiences of the war in South Africa. Frontal attacks are superseded in favour of flank movements, and this Bill may be described as a flank movement by which the declaration of the sole ownership may be quietly and effectively established and declared.

The amendment was supported by Gokhale in a powerful and closely-reasoned speech. It was vehemently opposed, among others, by the Honourable Mr. Muir Mackenzie, who said:

How many of the gentlemen who have criticized the proposed measure of the Government have spent any long portion of their

life in contact with the Indian ryot in his village? Can the honourable mover of the amendment, can the eloquent Professor Gokhale, or despite his recent experiences, the Honourable Mr. Pherozeshah, compare even faintly in their knowledge of village life, in their intimacy with the ryot, the son of the soil, with my friends the Honourable Mr. Logan and the Honourable Mr. Cumine, with the Collectors and their Assistants, most of whom not only support, but have long begged for a measure of the kind? Have my honourable friends ridden from village to village, chatted with the people in the *chavri*, in the field, by the roadside? What do they, after all, know of the poorer Deccan Kunbi, or the Gujarati Koli, except perhaps, as a defendant in a money suit, or a witness in the courts? With all my admiration for their talents, I respectfully doubt whether, despite identity of race, the familiarity of language from birth, they know as much of the true people as the District Officer, keen on that first essential of his business, the discovery of the wants of the people.

After nearly a dozen other speakers had addressed the Council, Pherozeshah replied to the debate in a speech which occupied fully an hour. He knew he was fighting a losing battle, but, as he had observed only a day previous during the discussion on the Budget, it was not the first time he was doing so. With considerable emphasis, he once again vindicated his claims to speak on behalf of the ryots as against the omniscient district officer. He claimed to know village life far better and far more truly than English officials, including among them the honourable members, who had ventured to repeat a pretension which had often been exploded, and which he had exposed more than once on public platforms:

The English official moves among the natives, isolated even when not unsympathetic, ignorant even when not uninquisitive, a stranger and a foreigner to the end of the chapter. My Lord, I can therefore truly say that it is I and my native colleagues who can claim to speak at first hand, and of our own personal and intuitive knowledge and experience of the feelings and thoughts of the ryot, his prejudices, his habits of thought, his ways of life, his

ambitions and his aspirations. In speaking on this Bill, it is we who represent the real views of the agricultural masses, not the insular and isolated English official.

Pherozeshah went on to condemn the empirical legislation, which sought to do away by a stroke of the pen with a system established by the statesmanship of an earlier generation of revenue officials of great experience and sympathetic insight. It was not for their successors to set themselves up as their critics. The officials of the day were no longer the giants of old; they were narrow and dogmatic in their views, and intolerant of differences of opinion.

It was a powerful indictment, and traversed a wide ground. One by one, the speaker demolished the positions taken up by the supporters of the Bill. He held up their pretensions to ridicule, poured scorn on their efforts to belittle the opposition, and subjected to a masterly analysis the claims they advanced on behalf of the measure. It was a speech which, in the House of Commons, or any other Parliament of free men, might have turned the scale, might have converted a hopeless minority into a substantial majority. But the well-drilled ranks of the Government listen not to reason or argument. As an honourable member observed at a recent meeting of the Imperial Council, 'theirs not to reason why, theirs but to vote and die!' The amendment was defeated by fourteen votes to nine. Thereupon, as previously arranged, Pherozeshah left the Hall, followed by Bhalchandra Krishna, Goculdas Parekh, Daji Abaji Khare and G. K. Gokhale. The Bill immediately went through the second and the third reading, and was passed into law.

A storm of indignation broke in certain quarters over the heads of Pherozeshah and his loyal colleagues, who, at his bidding, had walked out of the Hall and declined to take any part in the solemn farce of going through the Bill stage by stage. Never had such an affront been offered, and Anglo-India and officialdom were furious. Their venom was mostly directed against Pherozeshah. It was he who had dictated this novel method of protest. Gokhale, indeed, had felt some doubts about the wisdom of the course proposed to be adopted, and had written at length to Pherozeshah, suggesting the desirability of his moving some amendments which might tie the

Government down to their declarations in the Council. At the same time, he had assured his leader of his loyal support in whatever course the latter thought proper to adopt, and declared that he would rather be in the wrong with him than be in the right by himself. Pherozeshah was not exactly pleased with this attitude, and had wired to Gokhale that he was free to act as he liked; whereupon, the latter had given in at once, saying he did not wish his conduct to be regarded in the light of a revolt against Pherozeshah's authority, which he deemed it not merely a duty but a privilege loyally to support.

*The Times of India* in a scathing article sought to hold up Pherozeshah and his colleagues to ridicule, in the inimitable vein characteristic of Mr. Lovat Fraser:

It is difficult to contemplate seriously the spectacle of Mr. Mehta striding towards the door, in order to emphasize the novel theory that the duty of the true patriot is to run away; while the gentlemen who rather sheepishly stole after him only excite feelings of compassionate amusement. Mr. Mehta does not often make tactical mistakes, but he blundered rather badly in his pre-arranged exit from the Council Hall. Meant to be dramatic, his performance was merely comic. Mr. Mehta had evidently forgotten the wholesome lesson of Burke and the dagger, or he would never have permitted himself to move the Presidency to smiles, when he wished to be particularly impressive. He forgot, too, that little scenes of this description should at least convey the idea of spontaneity; whereas a good many people knew beforehand what was going to happen. It is a risky experiment for public men to take to histrionics towards the end of their career. They may like Michael Finsbury in "The Wrong Box" rehearse the necessary walk with telling effect; but they are tolerably certain to come to grief in the stage management. . . . A toga would have been useful; it can be flung over the shoulders at the last reproachful pause on the threshold. But Mr. Mehta had not a toga at hand; his exit was anything but dignified! and somehow the shallow artifice fell flat. The Revenue Bill remains where it did,—and everybody is laughing. That is generally the fate of

these performances, as Mr. Mehta's ingenuous followers will do well to remember next time they meditate amateur theatricals.

At the end, *The Times of India* suggested that it was a matter for discussion whether those members who had shaken the dust of the Council Chamber off their feet ought not to resign their seats. The non-official members were nominated to perform certain public duties, and if they proposed to follow the practice, when in a minority, of declining to participate in the meetings of the Council, their assistance was not essential to the conduct of business, and their connection with the Council became superfluous. The obvious consequence would be that it would become necessary to nominate other members who had a clearer grasp of their duties to the state and the public, and if such a necessity arose, it was desirable that it should be unflinchingly adopted.

It was not to be expected that Pherozeshah would take these strictures lying down, and in three successive letters to *The Times of India* he expounded at length the case for the Opposition, without, of course, convincing his adversary. Time has shown which of the contending factions had the right on its side. From the attitude subsequently adopted by Government towards the question, one may legitimately draw the inference that they came to realize in some measure that the opposition to the Bill was based, not on ignorance or self-interest, but on a true appreciation of the wants, habits and conditions of life of the ignorant and down-trodden ryot.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE KITCHENER INCIDENT— PHEROZESHAH AND THE CONGRESS 1902-1904

THE dull days which followed were in the nature of a reaction from the passion and bitterness evoked by the controversy over the Land Revenue Bill. In September 1902, however, local politics were enlivened by a little storm in a tea-cup, which arose through a movement to honour Lord Kitchener. "The hero of Omdurman" was coming out to India as Commander-in-Chief, fresh from his triumphs on the blood-stained veldts of South Africa. The veteran editor of the *Rast-Goftar*, Mr. Kabraji, felt that the first Municipality in India ought not to let the occasion pass by without honouring the most distinguished soldier in the Empire. He brought up, accordingly, a proposal in the Corporation for presenting an address of welcome to Lord Kitchener on his arrival in Bombay.

A stickler for principles and precedents, Pherozeshah opposed the motion, though he keenly appreciated Lord Kitchener's great qualities as a soldier. He pointed out that the custom of the Corporation was to honour only the representatives of the King, the members of the royal family, and such individuals as had rendered distinguished services to the City. He instanced the case of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand—whose tragic death at Sarajevo in the fateful July of 1914 was to plunge a whole world into war—whom it was sought to honour in a similar fashion on his visit to India. On that occasion, the Corporation had looked up precedents, and carefully considered the matter, with the result that the proposal had to be dropped. Pherozeshah went on to point out that the Corporation had never been known to present addresses of welcome to Commanders-in-Chief of India. Had there been such a precedent, it would certainly have voted them, on their departure from the country, to Lord Napier of Magdalla, one of the most gallant officers of the British army, and to Lord Roberts, another general of distinction, who were

both universally liked and respected. These arguments weighed with the Corporation, and the voting resulted in Mr. Kabraji's motion being defeated by a large majority. The comments of the *Indian Daily News* of Calcutta will best indicate the feeling that was roused in certain quarters by the incident:

Our London correspondent states that the utmost surprise is felt in London at the refusal of the Bombay Corporation to present Lord Kitchener with an address of welcome; but if they knew in London as much as we do in India about the 'finest municipality in the East,' they would hardly have been taken aback. Since Lord Reay's Bombay Municipal Act, at the birth of which Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta presided as chief nurse, the Bombay Corporation has become a sort of diluted Tammany with Mr. Mehta as supreme Boss. It must be said to the latter's credit, as a rule, he uses his autocratic power in the best interests of the city; but like most autocrats, he is impatient of criticism and intolerant of independence, especially among his own race. That is why Mr. Kabraji's motion was thrown out. Had it been proposed by 'Eha,' or Mr. James MacDonald, in a speech in which the Parsee Dictator was soothed with a little gentle flattery, we believe the proposal would have been adopted, and Bombay saved from the ridiculous position in which she finds herself today.

The article ended with a wail that it was hard that the whole of civic India should suffer in the estimation of the new Commander-in-Chief, because, forsooth, two Parsee citizens well past middle age were unable to forget the quarrels of their youth. If the writer had recalled Mr. Wacha's outburst during the discussion on the proposition about 'the Mahdi's tomb,' he would have realized that it was not altogether a question of precedents or personalities that weighed with the majority. The Corporation and the public whom it represented, could scarcely be expected to enthuse over victories, which whatever their value to other parts of the Empire, meant nothing at all to a country, which was made to realize in a hundred different ways that, in spite of all the fatuous flapdoodle about "the brightest jewel in the British Crown," it had really no recognized place in the Imperial Federation.

## II

The Congress was to hold its annual session at Madras during the Christmas of 1903, and from many quarters Pherozeshah received urgent requests to attend it. He had not yet favoured the Southern Presidency with his presence and guidance, though repeatedly urged to do so. Five years before, when the Congress was to be held in the same place, Mr. Pillai of the *Madras Standard* had represented to him that there was a consensus of opinion that the success of the session largely depended on his presence, and begged him to attend. He had also received a strong representation from Mr. (now Sir) Sankaran Nair, one of the strongest personalities in the ranks of the Congress, who having heard that Pherozeshah was likely to stay away if some of the noted Extremists were going to be present at the Congress, had written to the former in terms of mild remonstrance. Putting the case from what must be regarded as the correct standpoint, he had pointed out to Pherozeshah the danger of staying away and leaving the Congress in the hands of irresponsible elements:

Don't you think that is the strongest reason why we all should muster strong, lest anything foolish should be done by the Congress? In smooth waters, the Congress does not, perhaps, need Mr. Bonnerji or you. But if in critical times you are absent, the Congress will drift into the hands of men we may not like. Allow me to remind you of the advice Gladstone gave our delegates, never to allow disloyalty to get the better of us. If you and others like you come here, you may depend upon it the Congress will listen to us. If it does not, and the Congress does anything savouring of disloyalty in spite of your advice, it will be time for you and those who think like you, myself for instance, to leave the Congress to shift for itself. For Goodness' sake, do come.

Pherozeshah, however, had not found it possible to go for various reasons. When the opportunity came again in 1903, he was pressed once more from many quarters not to disappoint the people of Madras. Among those who appealed to him was Mr. Viraraghavachari, one of the most prominent Congressmen in the province, who

strongly urged on Pherozeshah the importance of his presence. The Madras leader pointed out that the movement was slowly drifting without proper guidance. Things were not moving in the right direction ever since the absence of the Father of the Congress, "whose word was law, and whose expostulations, scolding and even bullying were accepted as a privilege by the recipients." There was a widespread desire to have a change in the working of the Congress and in the list of subjects that were annually discussed. It was felt that the movement had degenerated into an annual occasion for a large number of speeches on a portentous array of propositions, only a very few of which were heard of again till the next session of the Congress. There was also a feeling, he continued, that some sort of constitution should be given to the movement. The young men were getting restive and chafing at the bit. All sorts of wild proposals were being made, and the air was thick with the signs of the storm that was gathering. The Congress was loudly crying for its old and trusted leaders.

Pherozeshah obeyed the call and went. Lal Mohan Ghosh, who, after a brilliant public career, had lived for some years in retirement, had been brought out from his political seclusion and elected President. His speech from the chair was in print a few days before the session was to be held, but somehow Pherozeshah did not receive a copy for some time. He had been told that the President-elect had in his address mildly chastised some of the older leaders, notably Pherozeshah himself, for their autocratic exercise of authority over the Congress. He had warned the young men who aspired to be leaders, against factions and cliques, and had urged them to be especially careful that their own acts might not be condemned as autocratic by the rank and file of the party. They should take care, he had said, that it might not be said of any of them what Gibbon had said of one of the Roman Tribunes, that "he spoke the language of patriots and trod in the footsteps of despots."

When the speech was at length placed in the hands of Pherozeshah, he decided upon taking the wind out of the sails of the President-elect, and took charge of the proposition for electing him to the chair. After paying a tribute to the great abilities of Mr. Ghosh, Pherozeshah went on to suggest that he had become a

political *Yogi* after his electioneering campaigns in England, and had possibly formed ideas which were remote from the realities of the situation :

For example, Brother Delegates, he may imagine that I, a mild Parsee, belonging to a mild race, may be charged with being a despot. Why, gentlemen, he might apply to me the words from one of the great historians, that I talked the language of patriots but trod in the footsteps of despots. Can there be a greater calumny on a mild Parsee than that? Then, gentlemen, he might again imagine, not coming in actual contact with us, but reading only newspapers, that there are terrible factions and cliques in the Congress. I will venture to tell him, now that he has come out of his political *Yogism*, that we have our little differences—we always had them and shall have them I hope, but factions and cliques founded on personal objects and selfish aims have been totally unknown to us.

The humour of the situation created by this unexpected move was much appreciated by the audience, which had copies of Mr. Ghosh's speech already in its hands. But the unfortunate President was greatly taken aback, and not unnaturally, did not like his being outwitted in such a fashion. He took it in good spirit, however, and when at the commencement of his address, he referred to Pherozeshah's observations, he merely remarked that if he was suffering from any delusions, he had the consolation of knowing that his delusions were shared by some of the leading Indian newspapers in Calcutta and Madras.

The incident was widely commented on. The low murmurs which were so often heard against the almost despotic sway exercised by Pherozeshah over the Congress, had at length found definite expression in a presidential address. How far the pointed rebuke administered by Lal Mohan Ghosh was calculated to affect the position of the dictator, it is difficult to tell. The situation was so adroitly handled by Pherozeshah, and the tables were turned so neatly, that the anger of his opponents was dissolved in laughter. Critics, whether hostile or friendly, seemed to enjoy the clever move, and to

realize more clearly than ever that as a debater and tactician there was none to approach the Bombay leader. *The Madras Standard* in the course of a leading article headed "Mr. Mehta and the Congress," reflected the general opinion of the country on this much-discussed incident:

Mr. Mehta thinks that the word despot has been applied to him. We do not know we did so; but in our opinion, he is anything but a despot. He is a leader of men, but not of the despotic sort. In his own sphere, he is the Rupert of debate, but with none of Rupert's defects in the field of action. He is great, but not as the man to whom the term Rupert of debate was first applied by Lytton, the novelist and statesman. He beats down his opponents by the weight of his facts, by the overwhelming force of his arguments. A man who is nurtured, and lives in the atmosphere of debate, where all are alike and free to use their own weapons, cannot certainly be a despot. Even if Mr. Mehta be a despot, we would rather have the Congress led by him than by the most popular of our democrats. If the Congress is to be under the despotism of one man, it will be to its advantage to be under the despotism of such a man as Mr. Mehta, perhaps the ablest and the most picturesque of Congress leaders. He can fire the imagination and stir the hearts of Congressmen more effectively than anybody else who is a Congressman. By the prudent vigour of his counsels, by his tact, by his judgment, and by his deep knowledge both of the condition of the people and the working of the machinery of the Government, he could lead the Congress with success, and give satisfaction to the public at large. It is better to be led by such a despot than by a whole generation of democratic leaders.

This dominance was all the more astonishing in that it was often exercised from a distance. Though identified with the Congress from its very inception, and though he had rapidly attained a position of almost absolute authority, Pherozeshah did not maintain a close and personal touch with the movement. In spite of the entreaties of his friends and followers, who year after year urged him to attend and lead the Congress, he kept away from more than one session. He

was never such a familiar figure to Congressmen all over the country as were, for instance, Surendranath Bannerji, Madan Mohan Malaviya or Dinshaw Wacha. For all that, he exercised a dominating influence over the national movement. Leaders in other provinces took their cue from him on most questions of importance, and the influential Bombay section was always amenable to his control, and loyally supported the views and the general lines of his policy.

If Pherozeshah's authority was respected even from a distance, it is easy to understand that whenever the Congress was held in Bombay, his influence was absolutely supreme. He invariably became Chairman of the Reception Committee, and overshadowed everybody, including the President. It was this personal ascendancy which materially contributed to the success of the Bombay session of 1904, and stemmed the tide of extremism which arose at Benares in the following year, gathered strength at Calcutta, and finally submerged the Congress at Surat. His masterful direction of affairs ensured its smooth working, and his association with the Reception Committee as its spokesman lent weight and dignity to the session. His speech of welcome to the delegates struck a note of robust optimism calculated to drive away counsels of despair. Starting with a vindication of the necessity of holding the annual session, he laid before the audience 'the confession of faith of a devout and irreclaimable Congressman':

I am an inveterate, I am a robust optimist like Mahadeo Govind Ranade. I believe in divine guidance through human agency. It may be the fatalism of the East, but it is an active not a passive fatalism, a fatalism which recognizes that the human wheels of the machinery must actively work to fulfil their appointed task. My humility saves me from the despair that seizes more impatient souls like those who have recently preached a gospel of despondency—I always seek hope and consolation in the words of the poet:

'I have not made the world, and He that has made it will guide.'

My steadfast loyalty is founded upon this rock of hope and patience; seeking the will of Providence, like Oliver Cromwell, in

dispensations rather than revelations, seeing God's will like him in fulfilment of events, I accept British rule as Ranade did, as a dispensation so wonderful, a little island set at one end of the world establishing itself in a far continent as different as could be, that it would be folly not to accept it as a declaration of God's will.

It was, he continued, the business of the politically-minded classes to see that those who had been sent to rule over them should unwaveringly pursue the policy of righteousness, which the statesmen who had consolidated British rule in India had declared to be the guiding policy of the Crown. He scouted the notion that the salvation of India was not to be sought in the field of politics in the existing stage of her development. The educated classes would have been sadly failing in their duty if they had not devoted their new culture and energy to the task, not of supplanting their rulers, but of guiding them and supplementing their endeavours. He deplored all the more, therefore, the attitude of Englishmen towards the Congress. It was a grave political blunder to treat the movement with resentment or contempt. A section of the Congress had condemned it for its disappointing inutility, and their denunciations had been received with exultation in certain quarters. With prophetic inspiration, Pherozeshah warned the enemies of the Congress against this foolish attitude. He asked them to realize clearly that the men whom they cheered did not possibly desire to abandon altogether the field of politics, but might in time be carried away vainly to imagine that the failure of constitutional methods like those of the Congress were an argument to substitute others not so strictly temperate.

Pherozeshah next dealt at some length with the achievements of the Congress. It was an honourable record which left no room for disappointment or despair. Apart, however, from any material achievements, the greatest triumph of the Congress lay in the awakening of the soul of the nation, and the forces it had let loose, which were clamouring for expression in so many fields of human activity. The address concluded with an expression of hope that Lord Curzon, while he asked Indians to believe in the good faith, high honour and

upright intentions of his countrymen, might come to realize that the Congress, too, was inspired by duty, patriotism and loyalty.

In its vindication of the aims, methods and achievements of the national organization, and in its exposition of his own political faith, it was a notable pronouncement, and was listened to with rapt attention by the vast gathering which had assembled in the spacious *pandal*, erected on the site on which the Prince of Wales Museum now stands. It was punctuated with applause, and its close was greeted with tumultuous cheering. Appreciation of it was not confined to the immediate circle of those who were accustomed to hang on his words. *The Times of India*, no friend of the Congress in those days, while describing that staunch and devoted servant of India, Sir Henry Cotton, who presided over the deliberations of the Congress, as 'a somewhat indifferent performer upon a penny trumpet,' whose oration had not risen above the level usually attained by any respectable vestryman, characterized Pherozeshah's speech as one of the best he had delivered in point of language and of sentiments:

It is no flattery to say that Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's address, though bearing signs of hasty preparation—one portentous sentence of three hundred and fifty words must have left the worthy knight breathless—was incomparably the better effort of the two. It was witty and pungent, and contained one or two clever home-thrusts; the delightful quotation of Sir John Bowley's point of view was one of the greatest things heard on the Congress platform for many a long day. We can forgive much to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta in that he is never dull, though it is really time he read more poetry and allowed certain overworked verses a little rest; and when we discover him modestly comparing himself to Oliver Cromwell, we find ourselves murmuring that perhaps a more suitable standard of comparison is found in Boanerges.

The official report of the Bombay Congress of 1904 issued by the committee speaks in grateful and eloquent terms of Pherozeshah's share in the success of the session. We are told that when other provinces were hesitating about inviting the Congress, Pherozeshah boldly stepped forward, and with a sublime confidence in his city

and his presidency, offered to arrange its being held in Bombay. His towering personality, great powers of organization, undisputed position as a leader and wonderful tact made everyone proud to work under such a chief, and made the gathering the notable success it proved to be. After such encomiums, it is hardly surprising that a friendly critic felt constrained to observe that, though there was a good deal of truth in all this, he imagined Pherozeshah would have preferred to remain a little nearer the level of average mortals!

It was at this Congress of 1904, that a mild revolt against Pherozeshah's authority broke out. During a heated discussion in the Subjects Committee, one of the Punjab delegates—Lala Murlidhar, according to most accounts—complained bitterly about Pherozeshah bearing down all opposition, and carrying everything his own way. Pherozeshah got up, and answered at length the charge flung against him, and ended by innocently asking the delegates why they did not press their views upon the committee, and carry it with them. Said the Lala, "but your personality carries everything before it." "I can't help my personality, gentlemen, can I?" quickly retorted Pherozeshah, and this prompt and happy rejoinder at once silenced his critics, and averted what might have proved an acrimonious discussion. While the rebellious section remained sullen, the impression left on the minds of the majority of delegates was one of whole-hearted appreciation of the great gifts which had given Pherozeshah the position of unchallenged supremacy which was so bitterly resented in certain quarters. Mr. Natesan, the enterprising publisher of Madras, and a staunch Congressman, gave expression to the general sentiment in a letter he wrote to Pherozeshah on his return home :

I can never forget the two happy evenings I passed at your house. I and my friends left Bombay with the regret that we were not privileged to stay there longer, and be benefited by your inspiring personality—despite Lala Murlidhar's complaint about it. It is only after we saw you and watched you with reverence and affection that we realized the force of personality and leadership. In a leading article on 'Japan—its message to India,' which I have written for the *Indian Review*, I have referred to you as 'the born

and chosen leader of the Indian people.' This is what we all felt to be.

One other matter before we dismiss the session of 1904. The Congress had passed a resolution for sending delegates to England to rouse public opinion in view of the forthcoming elections. Sir William Wedderburn, who had come out to attend the Congress, was anxious that the deputation should make a success, and before leaving Bombay, he wrote to Pherozeshah earnestly pleading with him the necessity of his taking the lead in the matter. All India desired him to do it; no one else possessed all his advantages. Even a fortnight's stay in England to start the campaign and give a straight lead would meet the absolute necessities of the case. Sir William would not have asked for such a sacrifice, but it was a case of public duty at a critical and favourable moment.

Pherozeshah did not go. His habits of life and his many pre-occupations made it impossible. It was ultimately decided that Mr. Gokhale and Mr. Jinnah should go as the representatives of Bombay on the Indian deputation. At the meeting held on May 3, 1905, for the purpose of appointing them, Pherozeshah presided and took the opportunity of reiterating the opinions, first expressed by him at a similar meeting held in Bombay twenty years before. In his view, the country could never hope for anything until Indian questions were thoroughly sifted and examined from every point of view before the British public and the British Parliament, and such a sifting and examination could never be attained, unless they were submitted to the clash of party warfare. Sir William was at one with him in this opinion, and the success of Mr. Gokhale's mission, when the great Liberal wave of 1906 swept the country, showed how their faith in the principles of that party was justified.

## CHAPTER XXII

### UNIVERSITY REFORM AND INDIAN LEADERS: A NOTABLE CONTEST 1902-1903

ONE of the most notable events of Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty was the controversy which raged over the question of University reform on which he had set his heart from a very early date of his assumption of office. The memorable Despatch of 1854 had given India an educational system that had unchained forces which had slumbered for ages. With occasional aberrations, the policy laid down there had been steadily pursued, and had created the new India of which one saw so many signs on every hand. With the growth of unrest resulting from the upheaval in men's minds, brought about by the influx of new ideas, a feeling had grown, however, that the system of education in India was at the root of the disease in the body politic. Some believed it was ungodly; others, that it was too exclusively literary, and it became the fashion to think that 'a literature which contained invaluable lessons for life and character, and a science which was founded upon the reverent contemplation of Nature and her truths,' had left no permanent impress upon the moral and intellectual fibre of the thousands of young men who had been fed and nurtured on them.

In the closing years of the century, attempts began to be made to control a system believed by its critics to be responsible for a vast amount of mischief. Lord Curzon, indeed, had declared in 1900, in a speech delivered by him as Chancellor of the Calcutta University, that he had no intention whatever of departing from what had always been the mainspring of the educational policy of the Government of India, namely, the substitution, where possible, of Government aid for Government management, and the encouragement of private initiative and effort. But he had made it clear that Government were not going to pay for education out of the public funds and to divest themselves of all responsibility for their proper allocation:

My desire, therefore, is to vindicate on behalf of the State and its various provincial agents that responsibility which there has been a tendency to abdicate, and to show to the world that our educational system in India, liberal and elastic as I would have it remain, is yet not free to assume any promiscuous shape that accident or intention may force upon it, but must conform to a scientific and orderly scheme, for which in the last resort the Supreme Government should be held accountable, whether it be for praise or blame.

The first step was taken with the calling together of a Conference at Simla 'to consider the system of education in India'. Every member of the Conference, barring Dr. Miller of the Madras Christian College, was a Government officer, and not a single Indian was appointed to that body. As even a warm admirer like Mr. Lovat Fraser has admitted, "Lord Curzon had said in Calcutta that he wanted to ascertain the trend of authoritative opinion; what he heard was the trend of official opinion."

The Viceroy opened the Conference with a masterly speech covering the whole field of Indian education. While pointing out the many defects which had crept into the system, he declared that he dissociated himself from those who held that the experiment of imparting an English education to an Asiatic people was a mistake. There had been blunders, but the successes were immeasurably greater, and the moral and intellectual standard of the community had been raised. He did not want to disparage and pull down, for his whole object was to reconstruct and build up.

The Conference was followed by the appointment of a Commission in January 1902, to consider the problem in all its bearings, and to suggest ways and means for placing the system of higher education on a sound and enduring basis. Mr. (now Sir) Thomas Raleigh was appointed chairman. The personnel of the Commission, with the exception of the inclusion of Mr. Gurudas Bannerji, a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, who later appended a dissenting minute, was not calculated to inspire confidence. Its labours, however, were watched with keen and anxious interest, and the leaders of the people in all the provinces spared no efforts to place the

Indian point of view before the Conference. Among them, none took a more notable part than Pherozeshah. In the memorandum which jointly with one of his political disciples, Chimanlal Setalvad, he submitted to the Commission, he deprecated the idea of making any revolutionary changes in the constitution of the Universities. He argued that the Senate and the Syndicate had worked very satisfactorily on the whole, and did not call for any radical reform. As regards examinations, he was of opinion that too much importance had been given to them as a test of knowledge and culture. The real aim must be to secure efficient training, and this could only be achieved by insisting upon persons of the highest academical qualifications as professors, the University being given greater powers of supervision, and by reducing the number of examinations, and modifying the existing system of determining the success or failure of candidates. The frequency of examinations interfered with freedom and variety of teaching, encouraged cram, put an unnecessary strain on students, and gave them little time to digest what they had learnt. He finally urged that the recognition or affiliation of colleges should be left entirely to the University. In his lengthy examination before the Commission on 4 March 1902, he elaborated the position he took up in this memorandum.

The Commission made a somewhat hurried tour of the country, and was ready with its recommendations in June 1902. When its report was published, its reactionary character raised a storm of protest in all parts of the country. It was felt that an attempt was being made, not at the reform of existing institutions, but at their wholesale destruction, and that a system was proposed to be substituted, which was calculated to do away with the popular basis of education. Briefly summarized, the recommendations of the Commission amounted to a raising of college fees and examination standards, a reconstitution of the Syndicate and the Senate, the imposition of stringent conditions with regard to the recognition of affiliated institutions, and a general discouragement by various devices of private enterprise in the field of education. The Commission laid down that in all matters relating to higher education, efficiency must be the first and paramount consideration. It was "better for India that a comparatively small number of young men

should receive a sound liberal education, than that a large number should be passed through an inadequate course of instruction leading to a depreciated degree."

The report with the observations of the Government of India was sent to local governments, and in due course came before the University of Bombay, which appointed a committee to deal with it. The latter, under the guidance, chiefly of Pherozeshah, subjected the recommendations of the Commission to a searching examination, and drew up a report which completely knocked them on the head. In moving its adoption at a meeting of the Senate held on 14 February 1903, Pherozeshah dwelt with considerable force on the reactionary character of the conclusions arrived at by the Commission. He said he had been a Fellow for over thirty-five years—being one of the young men, fresh from college, whom Sir Alexander Grant thought fit to be associated in the work of the University which had manufactured them—but during all that period he did not remember a more momentous matter brought before the Senate than the one under consideration. Referring in the first place to the Despatch of 1854, he pointed out that its distinguished authors had laid down no misleading efficiency test, but had deliberately preferred a wide expanse of general knowledge, though not of the highest value. When, therefore, the Universities Commission moralized in the concluding paragraphs of their report that 'efficiency must be the first and paramount consideration,' they were approaching the problem, not from a statesman's point of view but from that of a pedagogue. The logical consequence of such an attitude would be to discredit primary education altogether, and to abolish all secondary schools unless they led up perforce to colleges.

As regards the personnel of the Commission, Pherozeshah said he wished to speak with due respect of the able and accomplished men who composed it, but he was not aware that they were men who possessed any special or commanding qualifications for the task entrusted to them. They had, besides, not considered it necessary to base or fortify their conclusions upon the evidence which they had collected in a hurry as they rushed from place to place. It could not, therefore, be a matter for complaint if their recommendations had no more weight attached to them than those of any other seven men

of equivalent qualifications, on subjects on which the most eminent men of English or Continental Universities were not yet agreed.

Coming to the recommendations of the Commission, Pherozeshah did not desire to go into a detailed discussion. As regards the changes proposed in the constitution of the University he was of opinion that there was no occasion to tinker with it. All that was required was a generous introduction of the elective principle in the nomination of Fellows. The talk about the unwieldy and unexpert character of the Senate was a great deal exaggerated. The Commission had claimed that the reformed Senate proposed by them would in the main be a body of experts, who would be protected against the incursion of voters, brought together in large numbers only by the prospect of an election, or, by a debate on some question which had been agitated out of doors. On behalf of the Senate, Pherozeshah repelled the charge as inaccurate, illiberal and uncharitable. He wound up by expressing his surprise that in the matter of administrative reforms, the Commission should have seriously set to work to recommend for all time courses of study to be adopted by the Universities for the Arts and Science degrees. He thought the work could be properly left to the constituted bodies in each University to arrange from time to time in the light of increasing experience, and in consonance with local circumstances, conditions and requirements.

The report was adopted by the Senate. In getting the committee and the Fellows to accept it, Pherozeshah may be regarded as having scored a distinct personal success. Gokhale, who saw an advance copy of the report, wrote to Pherozeshah from Calcutta, paying a notable tribute of admiration :

That you should have got the European members of the Committee to join in all your criticisms and proposals, except one, is a remarkable triumph for us all, and everybody must recognize that it has been achieved mainly owing to your great tact and influence and your powerful personality. It is felt here that if the Bombay Senate adopt this report—as most probably will now be the case—the opposition to the Commission's recommendations will be enormously strengthened. They have no hope here of getting their own Senate to condemn the report as ours has done, or rather will

shortly do, and the difference in calibre and political grit between their leaders and ours is, therefore, at present being freely recognized here. You know how emotional these people are, and how easily swayed. The very men, who, after the Congress of 1901, were violent in their denunciations of your and Mr. Bannerji's high-handedness in extinguishing Nundy's Indian Congress Committee, are now praising you to the skies, and recognize in you—very justly—the greatest political leader in India of our time.

An even more striking testimony to the dominant part played by Pherozeshah in the memorable fight over the question of University reform was given years after by one of his ablest and most determined opponents :

The hostility with which Lord Curzon's schemes of educational reform were met was to a great extent the work of one remarkable man. In India, as in some other countries, the politicians who exercise the strongest influence are not always those who are constantly in the public eye. It was so in this instance, and the man who really stimulated and kept alive the fight against University reform is worth a little attention, for he played a great part in Indian political life during Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty, and his influence was not less potent because it was often unseen. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was at that time unquestionably the strongest and ablest politician in India. . . . The University lay near his heart. He viewed with indignation the proposals for reform, and thought—I am quite sure in all sincerity, and I know him well—that they were misguided. He set himself to stimulate opposition, and succeeded only too well. His friends in Bengal perhaps needed little encouragement from elsewhere; but the persistent antagonism of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had more to do with the difficulties which Lord Curzon experienced in the later years of his Viceroyalty than any other single factor.<sup>1</sup>

After months of heated discussion of the report of the Commission all over the country, the Universities Bill, which was largely

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lovat Fraser's *India under Lord Curzon and After*, pp. 191-193.

based on its recommendations, was introduced into the Legislative Council on 2 November 1903. Its principal features were thus explained by the Viceroy, whose personality was stamped on every phase of the long-drawn controversy :

Its main principle is to raise the standard of education all round, and particularly of higher education. What we want to do is to apply better and less fallacious tests than at present exist, to stop the sacrifice of everything in the colleges, which constitute our University system, to cramming, to bring about better teaching by a superior class of teachers, to provide for closer inspection of colleges and institutions which are now left practically alone, to place the Government of the Universities in competent, expert and enthusiastic hands, to reconstitute the Senates, to define and regulate the powers of the Syndicates, to give statutory recognition to the elected Fellows who are now only appointed on sufferance, . . . to show the way by which our Universities, which are now merely examining boards, can ultimately be converted into teaching institutions; in fact, to convert higher education in India into a reality instead of a sham.

Such were the principles of the Bill as enunciated by its chief sponsor. Indian opinion refused, however, to accept the Viceroy's estimate of the scope and purpose of his pet scheme, and the agitation continued unabated. The Senate of the Bombay University appointed a committee to consider the Bill. It lost no time in submitting its report, which came up for discussion on 21 December. In moving its adoption, Pherozeshah delivered another heavy indictment against the changes proposed to be introduced. At the outset, he desired to clear the position of those like himself who had strenuously opposed the so-called reforms which had been sought to be fastened upon the educational system in the country. He did not complain of the persistent misrepresentations of their attitude. He always held that intentions must be judged by acts and surrounding circumstances, and he regarded the solemn exhortations to avoid imputing motives as in most cases unmitigated cant. The honourable member in charge of the Bill, Mr. Thomas Raleigh, had said :

No corporate body cares to admit that its constitution needs improvement. If Parliament had waited for the consent of the University of Oxford, the statutes of Archbishop Laud might still be considered sufficient for all practical purposes; Professors might still be performing their duties as in the undergraduate days of Adam Smith; and college tutors might be following in the steps of the gentlemen on whom Gibbon conferred unenviable immortality by describing them in his autobiography.

To this charge, Pherozeshah retorted that the opposition to reform generally proceeded from corporations whose members benefited by their wealthy endowments, or by the possession of great power. The Senates of the Indian Universities were rich neither in the one nor the other. They were wealthy only in the opportunities they afforded to non-official Fellows of being abused and ridiculed and maligned when they endeavoured to introduce reforms suggested by their special knowledge of native capacities, needs and requirements. Mr. Raleigh had dealt mainly in assumptions, and had no practical experience of the Indian University system. His colleagues could only give him a one-sided view, and had brought to bear upon the problems an interested and prejudiced mind. The public might, therefore, well be forgiven for presuming that "a Commission constituted in a one-sided manner was constituted for the purpose of making a one-sided report."

The masterful Viceroy had framed an even more formidable indictment than that of his colleague. He had declared he could not imagine a worse reflection upon the educated classes in India, or a more crushing condemnation of the training they had been given than that they should band themselves together to stereotype existing conditions, or to defeat the first genuine attempt at reform that had been made for a quarter of a century. He had exhorted them to dismiss from their minds "all the wild talk about killing higher education, and putting education under the heels of Government." Pherozeshah said he accepted that assurance. He was willing to believe that that might not be the purpose and policy of Lord Curzon. But, he asked:

What guarantee is there that the same purpose and policy may not be revived, and with the absolute control which this Bill vests in Government the latter may not use it as an instrument, not for the purposes aimed at by the Viceroy, but for the purpose of clipping the wings of higher education, solely with the view of abolishing this bugbear of Anglo-Indians, the so-called discontented and conceited B.A.?

*The Englishman*, Pherozeshah continued, had frankly admitted some months before that one of the main objects of the proposed reforms was that the direction of University education should thenceforward be "under European control," and that the Universities should therefore be "under the domination of the Government through such a new constitution as may be established by legislation." That was the real drift and purpose of the Bill taken as a whole, and most of the other features occupied a subordinate place and were of doubtful utility. What was certain was that a clean sweep had been made of the integrity and independence of the Senate, which had been such valuable factors of healthy growth in the past. Was that a consummation, Pherozeshah asked in conclusion, to which the Fellows of the Senate would give their approval, or would they not rather resist it to the utmost of their power, however little it might be?

The speech was loudly cheered, and contributed not a little to the practically unanimous adoption of the report. *The Times of India*, which through thick and thin had warmly supported the policy of Lord Curzon, and which in turn was to receive a flattering testimony from the idol of its worship, put in a powerful plea for the Bill. It was sorry to find Pherozeshah among those who were determined not to be convinced:

Among the many and varied qualities which have made the Honourable Mr. Mehta what he is, the one picturesque figure of Bombay politics, he will not, we are sure, grudge us the pleasure of placing something of the aptitudes of the sophistical rhetorician. In the speech which he made at the University on the 21st December, Mr. Mehta gave the fullest play to these aptitudes.

Mr. Mehta enjoined on his hearers at the outset that they should disregard the solemn exhortations to avoid imputing motives as unmitigated cant, and to consider the question before them as they would a criminal case. That was, to say the least of it, a very remarkable adjuration to be uttered in what ought to be the home and sanctuary of the highest and the best in the life of a people. It might be expected that after expounding this cynical doctrine, the honourable gentleman would not have cared to complain of a real or fancied similar treatment on the part of others. But quite three-fourths of his speech was a prolonged wail over what this or that person had said of the motives or manner of the opposition to University reform. We have never been slow to recognize Mr. Mehta's abilities, but we shall not be in haste to adopt his political precepts . . . . Nothing has been more painful to us than the open contempt with which Mr. Mehta permitted himself to speak of educationists as a class. Such expressions generally come home to roost, and even in the fields of life which he has made his own, Mr. Mehta will not be long in reaping the reward of such a sowing of the wind.<sup>1</sup>

The Universities Bill survived the hammer strokes of Pherozeshah and the rapier-thrusts of Mr. Gokhale, who condemned the measure in a masterly speech in the Imperial Legislative Council. Under democratic forms of government, the arguments of these two men would have sealed the fate of the Bill; or, it may be, the measure might have passed into law, shorn of its most objectionable features. But it is one of the inevitable consequences of systems of administration which are autocratic in character, that important questions of policy have to be decided without any real assistance or guidance on the part of leaders of thought in the country. Criticism is not very helpful and tends to be merely destructive when the critic feels he has no hand in the shaping of the measures he discusses, and that the only useful thing he can do is to attack the weakest points and the most objectionable features.

Lord Curzon on the eve of his retirement from the country claimed that out of the storm over the Universities legislation "had

<sup>1</sup> 23rd December 1903.

been born a new life for Higher Education in India." That contention, it is feared, cannot be borne out by the facts. In the first place, many of the reforms languished for want of the necessary driving force after Lord Curzon's retirement from the country. In the next place, they did not quite go to the root of the problem, and were undoubtedly vitiated by a desire to place higher education under the more or less direct control of Government. It cannot be denied, however, that the measure achieved a certain amount of good,—it would have been strange indeed if it had been otherwise—and one finds it difficult to join in the wholesale condemnation it received at the hands of its critics. For one thing, the Senates of the various Universities, thanks mainly to Government, had been previously constituted in a manner little calculated to promote their usefulness. In Bombay, the Fellows numbered over 300, and many of them were unencumbered with any educational qualifications. One is almost inclined to agree with Mr. Lovat Fraser when he says that the Fellowship was regarded as "a minor distinction, useful for staving off importunate people who craved recognition, and ranking with, but after, the then equally empty honour of enrolment as a Justice of the Peace." Again, there was a great deal of truth in the statement of the Commission that "in a rightly governed University, examination is subordinate to teaching. In India, teaching has been made subservient to examination." Such a state of things undoubtedly called for a remedy. But the reforms which were introduced were in the nature of a sweeping condemnation of the existing order of things, and yet failed to touch the really weak spot in the system. As Pherozeshah had observed in his first speech before the Senate :

The fact is that the Commission has missed to give adequate and emphatic prominence to the great remedy for all the defects and shortcomings of our educational system for higher education. It was pointed out years ago by Sir Alexander Grant and Sir Raymond West and by many of us in later times. No Commission was required to tell Government that before any other reform was taken in hand, it was most essential to put the Government High Schools and Colleges intended to serve as

models of such institutions in a fit condition to do their full work. As Sir Raymond West more than once pointed out, our present schools and colleges are grossly insufficiently equipped and grossly insufficiently provided with necessary appliances and materials. I appreciate as well as any other person the importance of elevating educational ideals, but this object can be secured, without impairing the popular basis, by providing well-equipped and well-supplied models. Whatever there is unsatisfactory in the turn-out of our University system is mainly due to the default of Government in this respect.

It is a matter for infinite regret that so vital a problem as that of higher education should have been made the play-ground of factions, and should have been fought as an issue between officialdom, on the one hand, and the popular party, on the other. It was pre-eminently a question on which the combined wisdom of the Government and the educated classes ought to have been brought to bear for its right solution. Mr. Lovat Fraser has said that the problem, whether it is approached by Englishmen or Indians, invariably "stimulates prolixity, tends to the development of the most dogmatic opinions, develops bitterness in the most unexpected quarters, and frequently ends by becoming enveloped in a curious vagueness of thought." This is but a partial and somewhat misleading statement of the case. The real reason why the question of education has hitherto defied a solution lies in the fact that the interests of true learning have often been relegated to the background, and political considerations have been almost systematically allowed to dominate and vitiate the outlook and preclude the possibility of a fair and dispassionate consideration of a problem more intimately bound up, than any other we know of, with the progress and development of the country.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### OFFICIAL RECOGNITION—PHEROZESHAH AND LORD CURZON—THE CORPORATION AND THE ROYAL VISIT

1904-1905

HONOURS' lists in India, as in other countries, are seldom marked by any originality or distinctive features. With monotonous regularity, decorations descend upon certain well-defined types of people, whose only merit very often is a faithful discharge of their duties towards the State as conceived by those in authority. Now and then, a bold attempt is made to go outside the magic circle of mediocrity, servility and officialdom in which the Honours' List revolves, and a grateful public, prone to attach exaggerated importance to a prefix or a suffix, rejoices that merit has at length been "rewarded."

Such was the case when the Birthday Honours' list of 1904 announced the conferment on Pherozeshah of the dignity of a K.C.I.E. It must be accounted to the credit of Lord Curzon that he did not hesitate to recommend for distinction his most formidable opponent, and that he did not allow differences of opinion to obscure his appreciation of Pherozeshah's eminence as a leader. The event caused widespread satisfaction. All shades of opinion united in recognizing that the honour could not have been better bestowed. "E'en the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer." *The Englishman* wrote about his genial personality, and his brilliant abilities as a lawyer and a leader of thought, which would lend distinction to the title conferred upon him. *The Times of India*, one of his most vigorous critics, came out with a handsome appreciation, which showed that it was not unmindful of the conventions which must govern public life in all healthily-constituted societies :

Perhaps, the most interesting feature of the list is the Knight Commandership of the Order of the Indian Empire conferred upon the Honourable Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta. There have been

frequent occasions when we have found ourselves in antagonism to Mr. Mehta upon controversial questions. But we have never failed to recognize that he is unquestionably the ablest representative of the non-official native community now in public life in India. This Presidency is proud to claim him as one of her sons. But his reputation and his work alike have extended over the whole country. To great experience, sound judgment, a cool head and an exceptional gift of eloquence, he adds a sturdy courage in opposition and a resolute and unswerving independence which have long earned for him the admiration of his supporters and the respect of those who sometimes differ from his views. Time has mellowed and chastened the perhaps unrestrained ardour of Mr. Mehta's earlier years, but one honourable characteristic has been exemplified throughout his whole career. He has never stooped to palter with his own convictions in order to earn official approval, but has fearlessly fought for the right as he conceived it. An alert and strenuous antagonist, he has never forgotten that meed of courtesy to opponents which is one of the finest traits of English public life, and in that respect, as in many other ways, he has set an example which some of his compatriots might well profit by . . . . Without him the Bombay Corporation as it exists today would be a body commanding in an appreciably less degree the confidence of the public. Had he done nothing else than exalt this high ideal of fine citizenship before his countrymen, he would have deserved well of the Government. And in commanding him to the notice of the Crown, Lord Curzon has shown that generous appreciation of great ability and strength and honesty of purpose, which one would have expected from a statesman of his reputation.

Telegrams and letters of congratulations from individuals and public bodies poured in from all over India. The Ripon Club gave him a public banquet, where Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (the fourth of that name) presided, and spoke of him as "First among the Indian Bar; First among Indian Councillors; and First in the hearts of his countrymen,"—a somewhat quaint adaptation of the famous tribute paid to the greatest of America's sons. The students and 'old boys'

of the Elphinstone College gave him an entertainment, at which they presented him with a massive silver centre-piece that he treasured among his proudest possessions. The citizens of Hyderabad and Secunderabad and the Parsis of Karachi sent messages of congratulations and good wishes. The public of Ahmedabad presented him with an address full of felicitous references to his character, career and attainments. Amongst these and other tributes of affection and admiration Pherozeshah probably valued none more than the unique demonstrations of regard which he received from the Bombay Corporation and his colleagues on that body. The first to give expression to the general sentiment was the President, Mr. James Macdonald, one of the oldest and best-known figures of the day in the public life of the City. In a brief but happy reference from the chair at an ordinary meeting of the Corporation, before the regular business commenced, he expressed his gratification that "one who was unquestionably the ablest representative of the non-official native community now in public life in India" should at length receive the distinction to which his many valuable services had so long entitled him. In honour of the occasion he wished he could with propriety call upon his colleagues to give such a cheer for Sir Pherozeshah as would shake the walls to the very foundation, whereupon the members promptly took the hint, and cheered to the echo.

A few days afterwards, on 14 July, a special meeting of the Corporation was held in response to a requisition signed by 64 members, for the purpose of passing a resolution congratulating their leader on the honour conferred upon him. There was an unusually full attendance of members, and the visitors' galleries were packed with the general public. Many well-known citizens were accommodated in the hall. The proposition was moved by Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, seconded by Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtulla and supported by Colonel Dimmock and a host of other speakers, who racked their brains to discover what could be said of Pherozeshah, which had not been said hundreds of times before, or which could adequately express the admiration which his great talents and unique services commanded everywhere. The resolution recorded the great and valuable work done by him for the country and the

Empire in manifold directions, and the exemplary self-sacrifice and rectitude of purpose with which he had served the city of Bombay for more than a generation.

The Corporation felt that the event required signalizing in a still more marked fashion, and the meeting was followed by a banquet a few days later. It gave an opportunity to Pherozeshah of paying a tribute to the men, official as well as non-official, who had made local self-government in Bombay what it was. As regards his own success, he attributed it to the training and discipline he had acquired by long years of contact with the stalwarts of an earlier generation, European as well as Indian. They were men of great culture and ability, and they had shed lustre on the public life of Bombay. There were men of the type of Forbes, Maclean, Geary, Hancock, Martin Wood, Naoroji Furdunji, Vishvanath Mandlik and Sorabji Bengali, to mention only a few notable personalities whose memory deserved to be enshrined in the municipal history of Bombay.

Passing on to another theme, Pherozeshah dilated at some length on what had often been said as to his leadership. In connection with that, he said he wanted to make the confession that instead of leading he rather followed the Corporation! The idea tickled his hearers, and the remark was greeted with loud laughter. But Pherozeshah gravely went on to explain the phenomenon. The fact was this: he watched the trend of opinion of his colleagues on any given question; he tried to give out his own views with the object of evoking other views, and by these means he found out on which side the correct opinion lay. That had been his invariable practice for years, and he found from experience that the Corporation in almost all cases took a sound common-sense view of matters, and because he was able to fall in with that common-sense view, he was curiously said to be leading the Corporation! As a dialectical exercise, this piece of reasoning was certainly entertaining, though not expected to carry conviction to a public to whom Pherozeshah and the Corporation were synonymous terms. The real explanation of his leadership—and it was one which those who three years later attempted his overthrow overlooked, and which could not obviously have come from his own lips—lay in the fact that he was almost invariably in

the right, and that it was impossible not to be convinced by his arguments, fortified as they were by a shrewd judgment and vast knowledge and experience of public affairs.

## II

There had not been wanting uncharitable critics who had whispered that the K.C.I.E. was a sop thrown to a formidable enemy, which might result in moderating the vehemence of his opposition and the strength of his attacks. They were soon to find out that they did not really know the man. Not many months after, the very Viceroy who had so generously appreciated his merits, received from Pherozeshah a severe castigation on the occasion of his return to India to resume the reins of government, when a section of the Corporation proposed to honour him with an address of welcome. It at once called forth a strong but unavailing protest from Pherozeshah.

For Lord Curzon's early career, Pherozeshah had unbounded admiration. During his second term of office in the Imperial Council, he came much in contact with the brilliant Viceroy, whose great capacity and energy were universally recognized. Lord Curzon was then at the height of his popularity, and none foresaw the development in him of that spirit of obduracy and love of power which were his undoing, and which destroyed the brilliant promise of his early career. At the public meeting held in Calcutta in February 1899, in aid of the Famine Fund, when Lord Curzon was in the chair, Pherozeshah spoke of him as one who had unbounded affection and sympathy for the country and its people, and whose energy and force of character kept pace with his love and sympathy. Later on in September, when moving in the Corporation for an address of welcome to be presented to the Viceroy on the occasion of his intended visit to Bombay in the cold weather, Pherozeshah declared that in everything he had done, he had been guided by the noblest instincts of a statesman, and had always recognized the fact that the people of India ought to be governed in a spirit of sympathy and consideration, and with a steadfast regard for the feelings and sentiments of the various communities that inhabited this vast country. The address was drafted by Pherozeshah himself, and was so

generous in its praise that it was actually characterized by the then President as fulsome. Little did Pherozeshah then imagine that in the same hall he would have to stand up four years later and denounce the very Viceroy whose praise he had been singing so generously. The proposition which called for the performance of this disagreeable duty which he would fain have avoided, asked for the adoption of a cordial address of welcome to Lord Curzon on his arrival in Bombay to assume the Viceroyalty for a second time. It was moved by Mr. Hormusji Chothia, a well-known solicitor and an energetic member of the Corporation, and seconded by Colonel Dimmock. Pherozeshah felt it to be an imperative duty to oppose the proposition. He observed with regret that most of the important measures of Lord Curzon's administration had not been in conformity with his declarations and assurances:

The curtailment of the municipal franchise in Calcutta, the inauguration of a similar policy in Madras, the passing of the Official Secrets Act, the Universities Act, the withdrawal of competitive tests for entrance in the Provincial Service, and above all, the tampering with the declared policy of the Crown for the government of this country, as in the time of Lord Lytton, by misconstruing the words of the Great Proclamation of 1858, these are measures which we keenly deplore as most retrograde, reactionary and unwise. Rightly or wrongly, we believe that these measures are calculated to upset and revolutionize, or to use a more classic phrase, to break the continuity of that policy of righteousness which, though not always acted upon and sometimes submerged in turbulent waves, was never so openly denied to be the declared and unalterable policy of the Crown for the good government of this country as during Lord Curzon's administration. These injudicious measures have provoked sorrowful regret and sorrowful protest throughout a greater portion of this land. That being so, and holding views adverse to those expressed by the supporters of this proposition, I find it impossible to conscientiously join in the presentation of any Address in which, directly or indirectly, approval is given to measures of the character I have just described.

In the end, Pherozeshah showed himself willing to meet the mover of the proposition half-way, and to agree to a formal address of welcome to Lord Curzon as Viceroy and representative of the Sovereign, but not as Governor-General and Head of the Administration. Mr. Chothia having declined the compromise, Pherozeshah moved an amendment embodying his suggestion, which was thrown out by 27 votes against 26. It was a rare experience for Pherozeshah. For once, the body which used loyally to register his decrees failed him, and the significance of it was not lost on the public or himself. Slowly the forces were rising, which three years later culminated in the infamous Caucus which convulsed all Bombay, and brought shame and humiliation on her civic life.

## III

The strenuous, masterful and epoch-making régime of Lord Curzon was drawing to a close amidst a bitterness and resentment, which were in painful contrast to the record of his earlier years. Measure after measure calculated to excite disaffection and alarm had emanated from the restless brain of the Viceroy intent on doing his duty, and heedless of the currents of national life and thought. His was a mind which appeared to be incapable of understanding "the springs of human action, the weaknesses and passions of men, their inexplicable enthusiasms and those fierce heroisms that make them 'ready to do battle for an egg or die for an idea.'" Popular liberty in any shape or form was unintelligible to a mind rooted to scorn of the people. He made a fetish of efficiency, and forgot that good government can never be a substitute for government by the people themselves. In the result, a tremendous wave of unrest swept over the country, and sedition and anarchism began to rear their ugly heads. It was in such an atmosphere, charged with elements dangerous to the safety of the State, that the Prince of Wales, later to become King George V, came out to India to give the watchword of sympathy to those who were administering his father's vast dominions with a despotism popularly known as "benevolent," and which, consequently, they had come to look upon as a virtue.

The announcement of the Prince's visit evoked unbounded enthusiasm, and preparations were made to give him a welcome worthy of his exalted position, and expressive of the feelings and sentiments with which Indians are apt to regard the Royal House. Bombay, as the Gateway of India, bestirred itself early to give a reception befitting the historic occasion. Considering that the President of the Corporation would have a prominent part to play in the functions which were to be held in honour of the royal visit, it was a matter of some importance to select a man who would lend distinction to the position. Many ambitious men cherished a desire to strut on the stage at this juncture, and an exciting contest might have been witnessed, had not the Corporation instinctively turned to the one man on whom it fell back whenever a difficult situation arose.

It was more than twenty years before that Pherozeshah had occupied the chair of the Corporation. During that long period he had kept himself untrammelled by the restraints of office, and had ruled the Corporation with a firmness, wisdom and moderation, which had earned for that body a high reputation among the self-governing institutions in the country. People had got so used to his role of dictator, that it was difficult to conceive the idea of his settling down comfortably in the presidential chair, and listening patiently to long-winded discussions on all manner of subjects. But the occasion was unique, and the Corporation felt the need of its being represented by the man who, more than anyone else, had enriched and exalted civic life in Bombay.

The election was made in April 1905, with a cordiality and unanimity, and received by the public with an enthusiasm, which were a striking testimony to the position which Pherozeshah occupied in the public life of Bombay. The speeches made on the occasion drew from Pherozeshah the remark that he could scarcely recognize himself in the extremely ideal picture which had been drawn of him.

The strength of character and independence of spirit, which were among the leading characteristics of the new President, were unexpectedly called into requisition a few months later. The Municipal Secretary at his desire had written to Government, and invited their

attention to the notification issued in connection with the visit to Bombay in 1875 of the then Prince of Wales, in which the Chairman of the Corporation had been given a prominent place in the reception of His Royal Highness on the steps of the Apollo Bunder. The Secretary expressed a hope that the same arrangements would be observed on the present occasion. No notice seems to have been taken of this communication, which was followed by a Press-note which showed that the President, the Commissioner and the Sheriff of Bombay were not included among those who were to receive Their Royal Highnesses on their landing at the Bunder.

The announcement was received with surprise and indignation. The Corporation felt that a deliberate slight had been offered to it, and through it to the City, and an informal meeting was held, at which it was resolved to address Government and convey to them the feelings which their action had evoked. Something in the nature of a sensation had been created, and speculation was rife as to the outcome of the negotiations between the two bodies. What would the Corporation do, if the Secretariat remained obdurate? There were all sorts of rumours in the town. That the Corporation was determined to settle the question of its rights and privileges once for all, was apparent to all who watched its temper. Some members were prepared to go the length of moving an adjournment of the "meeting" at the Bunder at which the address was to be presented! Imagine such a thing taking place at the very moment of the royal landing! The authorities were alarmed, and the blundering official responsible for the arrangements, received a peremptory mandate to see the President and settle the matter with him. An informal meeting of the Corporation had been called to consider the situation on 8 November, a day previous to the arrival of the august visitors, and no time was to be lost. At 2 in the afternoon, Mr. Edgerley, Chief Secretary to Government, drove down to Pherozeshah's place at Napean Sea Road, and had a long interview with him, at which he was plainly given to understand the consequences of disregarding the wishes of the Corporation. Mr. Edgerley promised to convey the message at once to the Governor, and it was arranged that before the hour of the meeting either "Aye" or "No" was to be communicated to the President. A little before the appointed time, the

fateful message arrived over the telephone at the Municipal Secretary's office, announcing the capitulation of Government. Pherozeshah received from Mr. Edgerley a wire at almost the same time with the cryptic message "Yes."

An atmosphere of suppressed excitement pervaded the meeting on 8th when the members gathered to discuss the situation. In a tactful little speech, the President explained that he had been assured that a misunderstanding had taken place, and that no slight had been intended to be offered. The idea had been to work up the occasion in such a way that the welcome of the Corporation was to be the crown in the whole affair. Upon matters being explained to them, the Government had shown themselves willing to accede to the wishes of the Corporation. The President added he accepted the explanation readily, and recognized the cordial spirit in which the matter had been settled. This tactful utterance soothed the audience, and silenced the angry criticisms which were too ready to burst forth. Thus ended an incident which afforded painful evidence of the utter lack of imagination in the official mind. The matter was at best a trivial one, but through the perversity of the Olympians of the Secretariat, it threatened to create an unpleasant situation at a moment when all classes of people were preparing to extend a warm and enthusiastic welcome to the royal messenger of peace and goodwill. That the incident left no bitterness behind, and was forgotten as soon as it was ended, was largely due to the tact and friendly spirit with which Pherozeshah, while firmly upholding the dignity and authority of the Corporation, met the belated overtures of Government.

The Address was presented in a gaily-decorated *shamiana* at the Bunder in the presence of a large and brilliant assemblage. It had been drafted by the President himself, and was dignified and full of felicitous references. After the presentations had been made, Pherozeshah stepped forward, and read the Address, according to a newspaper report, in "clear strident tones." When it was over, he proceeded to the *dais* to present it, and to perform the pleasing oriental ceremony of offering bouquets and garlanding the illustrious visitors. For once in his life, it was observed that he was somewhat ill at ease. He advanced to the *dais* with some hesitation,

and Their Royal Highnesses and Lord Curzon were seen to smile at his embarrassment. The Prince expressed his thanks for the magnificent preparations made by the City in his honour, and expressed the gratification of himself and the Princess at what they had seen. The royal pair then warmly shook hands with Pherozeshah, who called for three cheers which were lustily given. The welcome accorded to the Royal visitors was in the best civic tradition.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE BATTLE OF THE CLOCKS— THE CAUCUS 1906–1907

THE Prince's appeal for sympathy was still ringing in the ears, when Bombay was thrown into a ferment over a controversy, which, at this distance of time, would appear somewhat trivial and silly. The restless energy of Lord Curzon resulted, among other things, in the introduction on 1 July 1905, of what was and is still known as Standard Time. Previous thereto, there was no uniformity; some places kept Madras or railway time, others their own local time. When the change was introduced by the Government of India, the Bombay Government and most public bodies put their clocks 39 minutes in advance of the local time.

The Corporation having been asked for its views in the matter, a resolution was passed on 5 October, authorizing the President to inform Government that the Corporation would be prepared to adopt Standard Time for all municipal purposes. The Government having ascertained the views of other public bodies, and found that there was a fairly large volume of opinion in favour of the change, announced that from 1 January 1906, Standard Time would be the official time for all purposes. When that resolution was communicated to the Corporation, some of the members showed a disposition to wriggle out of it, and by a narrow majority, it was decided on the motion of Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, a determined opponent of the change, that the municipal clocks should not be altered by the Commissioner without the express orders of the Corporation. This was not a very happy or logical way of settling the question, and in the January following, an energetic member, Dr. N. N. Katrak, moved that all municipal clocks should be set to Standard Time on and from the day after the passing of the resolution. When the division took place on this proposition, Pherozeshah, who was in the chair, declared that thirty-one members had voted for and thirty-one

against the proposition, and lost no time in giving his casting vote against it. Thereupon, a poll was demanded, and the result was that the proposition was carried by 31 votes to 30.

All through these proceedings, the muzzled lion felt very unhappy. He could do little more than sit helplessly and watch the fighting that was going on. It was known he was bitterly opposed to the innovation, and that he would take the earliest opportunity after the muzzle was removed to upset the decision arrived at. Preparations were made in due time for the approaching struggle, and the weak and the wavering were attacked with much vigour and sought to be captured. The manœuvre caused alarm and indignation in the camp of the supporters of the new Time. It was alleged that the matter had become a purely personal issue. Pherozeshah had suffered a virtual defeat, and he was eager to wipe it out and maintain his supremacy.

The long-expected occasion arrived a few days after Pherozeshah had divested himself, amidst the plaudits of the Corporation, of the dignity of the presidential office. In accordance with a notice of motion, he moved on 23 April 1906, that in view of the serious public inconvenience and hardship felt by the public, the Corporation were of opinion that Bombay Time should be reverted to, and that the Commissioner should be asked to set all municipal clocks accordingly. In support of the motion, Pherozeshah made a long and powerful speech, which occupied an hour and seven minutes in delivery. He denied that it was a personal matter with him. A mass meeting had been held under the chairmanship of Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, and a petition signed by over 15,000 citizens had been addressed to Government, which showed the strength of the feeling against Standard Time. The mover traced the history of the agitation which had taken place when a similar attempt at uniformity had been made, and when the Government of Sir James Fergusson had had the wisdom to retrace their steps in deference to popular opinion. It was, therefore, neither fair nor reasonable that, when the Government saw that the people of Bombay did not care for Standard Time, they would not reverse what they had done. Coming to the merits of the question, the mover pointed out that he could find no other instance in the whole world, in which it was proposed

to have one time for so large a country as India. The new system was, besides, not of a scientific character at all. So far as he could make out, the only thing in favour of it was that it was convenient to the railway travelling public. But it was not suitable at all to the shipping and mercantile communities. Calcutta had so far not been pressed to introduce Standard Time, because public feeling there was strong on the point. But poor Bombay had fallen on evil days ! The Government had not thought fit to consult the Indian population, or at least, a large majority of it, and Pherozeshah said he resented such a procedure :

I frankly tell you—you might call it a matter of sentiment or of prejudice—that the one important argument which bears upon the subject is the integrity, the dignity and the independence of the City. It is not fair and proper that the population of the City should be driven like a flock of dumb cattle because the Chamber of Commerce and the Port Trust adopted Standard Time regardless of the special circumstances of the city of Bombay. This is one of the things which has influenced me in coming again to enter a strong protest against an action of this character—a measure adopted by Government without consulting the feelings and sentiments of the people, and without giving them an opportunity of expressing their opinion. Perhaps, it is a matter of mere sentiment and prejudice, but I will always take a pride in standing up for the integrity, the dignity and the independence of the immense population of the city of Bombay.

The proposition was opposed, among a number of people, by Mr. Harrison, the Accountant-General, who was shortly to attain such an unenviable notoriety as the directing genius of the infamous Caucus. He observed that Pherozeshah had attained a deserved ascendancy in the Corporation, and it was a matter of deep disappointment, that in order to show that ascendancy, he had thought fit to drag in the mire the reputation of the Corporation for consistency, sobriety and good sense.

The voting was in the nature of a personal triumph for Pherozeshah, who was able to carry the motion by 31 votes against 22, a

result which was loudly cheered. Little did they imagine, they who applauded it, what it was going to lead to, how it was to bring to a head the resolve which had been formed deep down in the hearts of a handful of men, who, unmindful of the immense services of Pherozeshah, bitterly resented his dominance in civic affairs. The local 'Thunderer' in a scathing article, which faintly foreshadowed the unscrupulous campaign that was soon to come, described the achievement as worthy of being inscribed on the golden rolls of fame beside the proudest annals of little Pedlington. It described Pherozeshah as the Sergeant Buzfuz of Bombay, and said he had the trick of the thing to a nicety and would have delighted Dickens. He had succeeded in making the Corporation look extremely ridiculous; but then that particular spectacle was not even invested with the doubtful charm of novelty! The issue had not been upon the merits of Standard Time; it had been upon the maintenance of the prestige of Pherozeshah. It was not difficult to demonstrate that it was a Pyrrhic victory. In due course, Pherozeshah would find that he had sadly overcalculated his strength. Ominous words, indeed, the significance of which was very shortly to be borne in upon the public.

The subsequent history of Standard Time may be briefly told in this place. In July 1908, Mr. Harrison moved for the adoption of Standard Time by the Corporation, with a reservation in favour of the Crawford Market and Victoria Gardens clocks, which were to continue to be regulated by local time till otherwise ordered. Pherozeshah moved an amendment for adjourning the debate on the question till the Governor-in-Council had dealt with the prayers addressed to him by a public meeting, which had been held on 28 June, with the veteran Mr. Gokaldas Parekh in the chair, and which had petitioned Government to restore local time, and thereby remove an unnecessary cause of irritation and discontent. He was sorry Mr. Harrison had selected a time when the country was seething with unrest for agitating the question. It was a time when sober, thoughtful and discreet men of all races and creeds, and of all shades of opinions should have put their heads together to promote peace and harmony. It was not the time for adopting a policy of pin-pricks, and force the change on people who did not want it, and who were influenced more by sentiments and prejudices than by logic or

historical arguments. This plea worthy of a consummate tactician, prevailed with the Corporation, including even Mr. Harrison and his henchmen, and the amendment was carried. The controversy was shelved indefinitely, and died a natural death, though occasional attempts have been made to bring it to life again. The Crawford Market and the Victoria Gardens clocks still glory in Bombay Time, and proudly challenge vandal hands to touch them.

One cannot help feeling that all the excitement and bitterness roused by this little battle of the clocks was somewhat ridiculous. From a simple question of pushing forward the hands of the clock thirty-nine minutes, it came to be regarded as a sort of life and death contest between the popular party, headed by Pherozeshah, and the forces of officialdom. There was, of course, a good deal of unreasoning prejudice behind the determined opposition to the change, and even a feeling that a rude attack was being made upon the daily habits and observances of the people. It was, nevertheless, a matter in which, had the influence of Pherozeshah been cast in the scale, a quick and easy reconciliation with the change would have undoubtedly taken place, and people would have soon forgotten that they had made a trifling change in the hands of the clock. But for once, the great leader forebore to lead, and allowed his robust common sense to be affected by prejudice. His innate conservatism was not a little responsible for the tenacity and determination with which he fought the issue. It prevented his recognizing that uniformity of time has its advantages, however unscientific and arbitrary the standard laid down, and that the Corporation itself was one of the bodies which had approved of the change, and thus made itself responsible for its inauguration in the City.

## II

Two months after Pherozeshah had secured the rejection of Standard Time, a movement was initiated, destined to convulse all Bombay, and threaten for a time seriously to impair that harmony between the different sections of her population, which has always been such a distinguishing characteristic of her public life. It was believed in certain quarters that "that third vote was a personal attempt to show

the city who was master, to impose upon the Corporation a personal will in the face of its own opinion twice expressed." The opposition offered to the proposal for giving an address to Lord Curzon was another matter on which the enemies of the dictator fell foul of him. It was said he was growing too intolerant, and that his domination had reached a stage at which it brooked no opposition. The despot must be overthrown, his following must be crushed.

The father and promoter of this discreditable movement was Mr. Harrison, then Accountant-General to the Government of Bombay. Having conceived the idea of ridding the City of Pherozeshah's domination, he set about looking for allies, and found three men to help him, who, by the position they occupied, were capable of exercising a powerful influence on the course of events. First and foremost among them stood Mr. Lovat Fraser of *The Times of India*, a journalist who wielded a formidable pen and controlled a powerful newspaper. The others were Mr. Hatch, Collector of Bombay, and Mr. Gell, Commissioner of Police, whose official positions enabled them to dominate the Justices of the Peace, who were to be the instruments of the tortuous designs of the organizers of the movement. With the assistance of these men, Mr. Harrison began a series of manoeuvres without a parallel in the history of municipal elections in this, or, perhaps, in any other country in the world.

The General Elections to the Corporation were to come off in February 1907. Pherozeshah was a candidate as usual for one of the sixteen seats allotted to the Justices of the Peace. There were only about six hundred of the latter, and as a large number of them owed the "distinction" to the favour of some official or other, it was not a difficult task to manipulate the electorate. Hitherto, however, the Justices had exercised the franchise fairly judiciously, and had invariably paid Pherozeshah the compliment of returning him to the Corporation on his bare intimation that he was seeking their suffrage. One of the first things the organizers of the Caucus did was to issue a "ticket" containing the names of sixteen nominees of their choice, selected from the different communities, and pledged to break down the one-man-rule in the Corporation. Some of these precious candidates—"Independents" as they were dubbed with unconscious humour by the chief showman—were unwilling to

achieve the fame which was sought to be thrust on them; but they were somehow swept into the net, and held up to the admiring gaze of the world as men of light and leading, who would regard all municipal questions on their merits, and vote according to their conscience!

Having formed his "ticket," Mr. Harrison, backed by his allies, commenced operations on a large scale. Beginning with his own subordinates, he tackled successively the various departments of the Secretariat, the Railways, the Indian Medical Service, the Collectors of Customs and of Land Revenue, and other officials holding important positions under Government. Pressure and persuasion were freely employed to get all Justices who hung on their favours, or feared their frowns, to vote solidly for the "ticket." There were many, however, including Englishmen, who, while they showed themselves willing to assist the movement, were anxious to vote for Pherozeshah in recognition of his great services to the City. In the words of the leading journal, whose columns were so freely employed in the service of the cause:

The little campaign which is in progress may or may not be successful, but if it is successful, it may involve the rejection of a particular personality. 'Please don't do that,' say the waverers. 'Think of his splendid and devoted services to the City. Attack his followers if you like, but leave him alone. Why, if he was not elected, it might humiliate him! We disapprove of his domination, but he must be let alone, because he has done good work, and means well at heart.' And so they go their way, chanting their plaintive lay of 'Woodman, spare that tree, touch not a single bough,' in every place where men do congregate.

*The Times of India* went on to ask the waverers to remember that rejection at the polls did not involve in England any personal humiliation at all. It instanced the cases of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Balfour, Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley, and observed that no one ever thought any the worst of them for their defeat. It was all a part of the game. By such sophistries, the little lingering doubts of the waverers were swept away. No effort was spared to

bring to heel the imposing array of Government officials, contractors, pensioners and title-hunters who formed the bulk of the electorate. Mr. Fraser went the length of sending a misleading cable to the Aga Khan, and using his reply for the purpose of influencing his followers. Neither the original cable nor the reply was ever published, though the Chief Judge of the Small Causes Court in the subsequent inquiry fined Mr. Fraser Rs. 50 for his persistent refusal to produce them.

As the election day drew near, public excitement rose to fever-heat. The Caucus was the one topic of conversation everywhere. A tremendous wave of feeling swept over Bombay, and touched even distant parts of the country. With the exception of the *Bande Mataram*, the *Mahratta* and papers of that ilk, the bitterest political opponents of Pherozeshah joined in denouncing the movement, and in recognizing the immense debt which Bombay owed to him. Day after day, the hapless Justices were appealed to, threatened, argued with. *The Times of India* on its side carried on a ceaseless and vigorous campaign in support of the sixteen "Independents," who were to put an end to the régime of Pherozeshah and his "Bonds-men." It asked the critics of the Caucus not to forget that the affairs of the City had for years past been practically decided in an unpretentious office which was nowhere near the Municipal Hall. In its final appeal, it told the electors that all that the "Independents" sought to do was to settle civic affairs on civic lines. They would stand for true freedom in municipal life, and decline to make themselves the henchmen of any dictator. If they won, well and good. If not, Bombay would still enjoy the possession of her Boss, and make the best of him.

The appointed day, 22nd February, came at last, a day memorable in the civic annals of Bombay. The public had been admitted to the Hall, and the election took place amidst scenes of wild excitement. Mr. Shepherd, the Municipal Commissioner, was elected chairman of the "meeting" on the motion of Pherozeshah, who little realized the part he was playing behind the scenes. Just before the appointed hour, a large number of European Justices trooped into the Hall with their voting papers containing the names of the Caucus candidates ready signed in their pockets. The organizers of the

Movement had left nothing to chance. They did not want their voters to be worried, and thanks to the assistance they received from the Municipal Commissioner, and from their legal advisers who were always at hand, they had arranged that their stalwart supporters should not be troubled to do anything more than just step into the Hall, and hand over the voting papers. As soon, therefore, as the ballot box was opened, in went scores of papers supporting the "ticket." The voting throughout was very brisk, and the supporters of both sides kept up a keen contest. Though a large majority of voters went to the poll with their minds made up, now and again an exciting tussle was witnessed. Pherozeshah's position was the subject of anxious and constant inquiries. A large crowd inside the Hall and outside watched the course of events with bated breath, and occasionally relieved its feeling when it caught sight of some prominent member of the Caucus organization.

At the appointed hour, Mr. Shepherd declared the meeting closed. At this time, Mr. Fraser was observed to be standing close by the chairman, whereupon some one from the crowd called out "Times of India." At this a tremendous hiss went up. Mr. Fraser, however, faced the audience with complete self-assurance, and before leaving the Hall, shook hands with Pherozeshah and wished him success! The "uncrowned King of Bombay" followed soon after amidst deafening cheers from the crowd, which threw flowers and bouquets at him, and garlanded him profusely. People began running after his carriage shouting "We don't want a Corporation without Sir Pherozeshah," "Sir Pherozeshah means the Corporation and the Corporation means Pherozeshah," "One Pherozeshah is worth a thousand Harrisons," and delivering themselves of such other observations as only a crowd can think of.

The result of the voting showed that the Caucus had triumphed all along the line. All its nominees except one got in, and the only outsider who found a place was Sir Dinshaw Petit, who had had the independence to refuse to have anything to do with so disgraceful a movement. He, too, would have failed but for an objection as regards a single vote raised against one of the candidates belonging to the Harrison gang. Pherozeshah stood seventeenth on the list, with 231 votes to his credit. The result was received with pain and

indignation throughout the country. Newspapers and publicists of all shades of opinion gave expression to their feelings of resentment at the tactics which had succeeded in overthrowing the one man who had made the Bombay Corporation what it was, a model, despite all its faults, of local self-government in India. *The Madras Standard* observed that if the city of Bombay was so good a place to live in, and its municipal administration so efficient, it was in the main due to the patriotic labours of Pherozeshah. *The Indian Patriot* pointed out that his connection with the Corporation had raised it in the estimation of the public, and it was easy to realize that without him it would sink into insignificance, if it did not bring itself into contempt. These opinions reflected the sense of the whole country. If the Harrison-Fraser clique imagined that it had dealt an irreparable blow to the prestige of the dictator, a rude awakening awaited it. He was never more popular than in the hour of his defeat. Conservatives who distrusted and disliked him, nationalists who had grown to fear and hate him, alike poured out their sympathy and admiration. A movement was started to raise a statue to him, and a large sum was subscribed, but as on previous occasions, the idea had to be abandoned out of deference to Pherozeshah's wishes.

The defeat of Pherozeshah at the poll was temporary. One of the Caucus candidates, Mr. Suleman Abdul Wahed, by reason of his having contracts with the municipality was disqualified, and Pherozeshah as next on the list stepped into the place. Room had also in the meantime been made for him by Mr. Dikshit, one of his devoted lieutenants in the Corporation and the Council, who, out of a touching loyalty to his chief, had promptly refused to accept the seat in the Girgaum Ward to which he had been elected. This had provided an avenue through which Pherozeshah had walked in. When Mr. Wahed's election was invalidated, however, Pherozeshah resigned from the Girgaum Ward, and enabled Mr. Dikshit to rejoin the Corporation from which, with rare self-abnegation, he had chosen to retire.

The election was not allowed to pass unchallenged. A petition was filed in the Small Causes Court by Sir Bhalchandra Krishna and Messrs. H. A. Wadya and J. B. Petit to set it aside on the ground of its not having been a free and fair one, and on account of objections

as regards the change of date and the form of the voting papers. The legal issues arising in the case were decided by the Chief Judge, the late Mr. R. M. Patel, and the question of undue influence, by his successor Mr. Kemp, before whom a long and protracted trial took place, involving the taking of evidence of most of the leading figures in the Caucus movement. Some dramatic incidents were witnessed, some damaging disclosures were made, and many people had to look foolish in the course of this inquiry. The case was followed with keen interest, and was discussed for weeks on end. It resulted, however, as was not unexpected, in the election being upheld.

A representation made to Government by three non-official members of the Council, Messrs. Parekh, Setalvad and Dikshit, pointing out the gross impropriety of the interference of officials in the election, met with no better fate. It elicited a curt reply, in which the honourable members were told that the Government Resolution which forbade interference with the free choice of candidates related only to the elections to the Legislative Councils! For sheer sophistry, and one might almost say dishonesty, nothing could beat this official manner of disposing of the question, and it showed quite conclusively, if any proof were needed, that the Harrison gang had the support of people in high places.

These and other such incidents kept public excitement over the affair at fever heat. It culminated in a great demonstration which took place at Madhav Baug on the afternoon of 7th April. A mass meeting of the citizens of Bombay was called to give expression to the universal feeling of condemnation of the unconstitutional action of Government officials in interfering with the purity and freedom of the election, and to adopt a memorial to the Viceroy, praying for an inquiry into the affair. Long before the appointed hour, thousands of people of all communities flocked to the place, and filled every inch of space in the quadrangle and the halls. When the chairman, Mr. Gokhale, who had come down from Calcutta to attend the meeting, arrived, it was with great difficulty that he could make his way to the platform through the seething mass of humanity which surrounded the place. He received a rousing ovation. He was supported on the platform by a large number of leading citizens. The programme was a heavy one, but the vast crowd stood it with great

good humour, though experiencing considerable discomfort from the heat and the crush. The speeches were equal to the occasion, and found an appreciative audience, which received the name of Pherozeshah, whenever it was mentioned, with resounding cheers, and which hissed to its heart's content every time Mr. Harrison or *The Times of India* was mentioned. A passage from Mr. Gokhale's speech may be usefully quoted, as it bears on the oft-repeated charge about the autocracy of Pherozeshah :

A man with the great transcendental abilities of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, placing those abilities freely and unreservedly at the disposal of his city for nearly forty years, is bound to attain a position of unrivalled predominance in any Corporation and in any country. That such a man should tower head and shoulders above his fellowmen after such a record is only to be expected, and those who complain of this quarrel with the very elements of our human nature. Such predominance implies deep gratitude on the part of those to whose service a great career has been consecrated, joined to that profound confidence in the wisdom and judgment of the leader, which goes with such gratitude. Sir Pherozeshah's position in the Bombay Corporation is no doubt without a parallel in India, but there is a close parallel to it in the mighty influence exercised by Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham, and is not dissimilar to the position occupied by Lord Palmerston for many years in Whig England, and later by the great Gladstone in the councils of the Liberal Party.

The reply which the Government of India gave to the memorial adopted at the meeting was a curious piece of reasoning. They stated that as the matter had been fully investigated by the Courts, which had held that the officers who took part in the election had made no illegal use of their influence, the Government of India had no orders to pass in connection with the prayers of the memorialists. They added that in the case of an election by a body constituted as the Justices of the Peace, officers whose names were included in the list of voters could properly exercise a much wider freedom of action than in municipal elections of an ordinary type.

With the holding of the meeting, public excitement began to subside, and Bombay prepared to settle down and resume the even tenor of her existence. The first meeting of the newly-constituted Corporation, to the disappointment of a public eager for sensations, passed off smoothly and uneventfully. The valiant knights of the Caucus, who were to reform the municipal administration, and purge it of the taint which had so long affected it, were found to be very mild and harmless people. They certainly did not "stagger humanity" with their achievements. The dictator still remained master of the situation for all practical purposes. The ranks of his supporters had been thinned; his opponents had gained in numerical strength; but the Corporation continued to be dominated by his presence and led by his powerful intellect. The Caucus had triumphed; the Caucus had failed.

At this distance of time it is possible to take a dispassionate view of the doings of the Caucus, and the attitude of its organizers. It is interesting to recall, in passing, a fact, which is not generally known, that a somewhat similar movement took place as far back as 1880 in connection with an election by the Justices. Some one sent a ticket round containing the names of 10 English J.P.'s, and recommending the other six places being filled up as the electors liked, but from among the members of the English community. It was said the idea was to keep Pherozeshah out. But he managed to get the last place, chiefly through the votes of Indian Justices. Such stalwarts as Martin Wood, Tyabji and Telang were, however, knocked out. The principles for which the present Caucus stood, as proclaimed by its High Priest, were that it was bad for the Corporation and bad for the City that the Municipality should for ever be controlled and dominated by a single personality, or by a single set of individuals of the same ideas. This was, perhaps, sound in principle, but the "Independents" who preached it could find nothing else to object to than Pherozeshah's action on the question of Standard Time and the address to Lord Curzon. They had no policy, no programme of their own. They could not indicate any differences of principle in regard to municipal administration which divided them from Pherozeshah and his party. And they dared not deny the immense services he had rendered to the cause of local self-government. Indeed, the very organ which

had striven so hard to bring about his downfall, declared on the morrow of the election, when it gloated over the "sensational victory" the Caucus had achieved, that Pherozeshah remained then, as he had been for years past, the ablest non-European, not only in Bombay, but probably in all India, and that the movement which had culminated in his utter defeat had never for a moment been intended to exclude him from civic affairs, in which his great experience would always be of the utmost value.

With these facts against them, the conclusion is irresistible that the whole movement from first to last was animated by personal hostility to Pherozeshah. It was idle to say that the idea was to exclude him merely from the Justices electorate. The Harrison clique knew very well that nothing it could have done could have kept him out of a seat on the Corporation, so long as there were independent bodies of voters in the other constituencies. If the real object was to break Pherozeshah's power, without depriving the Corporation of the benefit of his unique experience of municipal affairs, it could have been achieved by overthrowing his following, the men whom he had made, the men, who, according to a widely prevalent notion, spoke with his voice and saw with his eyes. If, accordingly, the organizers of the Caucus had included him in the ticket, the movement would not have provoked that bitterness and hostility which it so abundantly aroused; but their idea was deliberately to throw him out and humiliate him. In a system of party government, when a man is thrown out by his constituency, it means his electors are out of sympathy either with his views or with those of his party, and are inclined to support the policy outlined by his opponent, which, for the time being at least, appeals to them strongly. But the Caucus had no programme, no policy, no ideas of its own. Its battle-cry was "Down with the dictator, away with his following." When that was accomplished, it fondly imagined its gallant little phalanx of "Independents" had done its duty and had purged the City of a most unwholesome influence.

Thus regarded, the Caucus must be condemned as a most discreditable movement. Of many of the men who engineered it, little else could have been expected. But there were some in that heterogeneous crowd which had ranged itself under Mr. Harrison's banner,

who might have been expected to have better sense than to associate with a movement, which had for its avowed object the overthrow of a citizen of whom any country might be proud. That it had the support of people in high places only goes to prove the short-sightedness and ingrained prejudice of the rulers of the land. Men of sobriety of views, honesty of purpose and sterling worth are seldom regarded by them with friendly eyes, until the forces of extremism and violence rear their ugly heads, when all at once these Rip Wan Winkles wake up and realize that those upon whom they looked down with suspicion and hostility because of their independence and out-spokenness, were after all the strongest pillars of the State.

While, however, the attitude of officials high and low can be readily explained, it is not easy to understand how the movement could have received the support of Indians of position and responsibility. It was largely with the assistance of Pherozeshah's own countrymen that the Caucus was able to achieve such a signal victory at the polls. A sad and disheartening thought indeed, were it not for the consideration that a higher standard of public conduct can only come when the people are entrusted with the responsibility of managing their own affairs. The Caucus forms a sad chapter in the civic annals of Bombay. Never again, let us hope, will such a movement, so utterly contemptible in every phase of it, disfigure her honourable record.

THE SURAT CONGRESS AND AFTER  
1907

THE tiny mite which saw the light of day in Bombay in 1885, after a period of healthy childhood, had now reached years of discretion. Year after year, the Congress had grown in strength and numbers, and had voiced the national aspirations with courage and faithfulness. Its annual gatherings brought together men of light and leaders from every province—the intelligentsia of the nation—and focussed public opinion on the many problems of Indian administration. Like all non-official parliaments of the people, it harangued and declaimed, and passed an alarming number of resolutions with unfailing regularity. In spite, however, of a little oratorical exuberance and a fondness for spectacular effect, the Congress served a distinct purpose, and held a well-defined place in the political life of the country. It crystallized public opinion, which was finding expression through numerous channels, and it roused the enthusiasm necessary for national progress as no other organization could hope to do.

During all these years of its growth to manhood, the Congress had trodden the path of constitutional agitation. The faith of its leaders was large in Time, and through obloquy, ridicule and disappointments they kept up a stout heart. Theirs was a voice crying in the wilderness, but they believed in their mission, and recognized that progress must be slow and that the ground must be fought inch by inch. They were content to work for the generations to come.

Towards the end of the century, came the Curzonian régime with its fetish of a soulless efficiency. In a fateful hour, the brilliant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, whose smartness was wont to delight the House of Commons, was sent out to succeed a mediocre and weak-kneed statesman. A singularly gifted man, he suffered from an exaggerated notion of himself and his mission in life. As Mr. A. G. Gardiner has observed, "Oxford was but a setting for one magical figure, Parliament the stage for one inimitable

actor, India the background for one radiant form in purple and gold." He came full of a lofty purpose, his imagination fired at the idea of ruling three hundred millions of orientals. He brought with him a dozen "problems" in his pocket and set about his task with a fearful energy. His appetite grew with what it fed on, and the dozen problems multiplied. India, official and non-official, looked on, amazed and stupefied.

As the masterful Viceroy began to encounter opposition in his head-long career, his spirit became more and more intolerant, and he devised measure after measure to beat back the rising tide of nationalism. The culminating act of this restless one-man rule was reached in the ill-starred Partition of Bengal, "the biggest blunder since the Battle of Plassey." A measure professed to be in the interests of efficient administration, the Bengali people regarded it as striking at the root of their growing solidarity of feeling, and as calculated to overthrow the political influence of the Bengali-speaking race. Never was there such an agitation as followed this hapless product of a misguided policy. It grew in strength and volume, and developed in a hundred different directions, until Royal sympathy and British statesmanship came to the rescue, and the "settled fact" was unsettled.

Side by side with the ferment produced by the events of an epoch-making Viceroyalty, there was a deep feeling of discontent among the more ardent spirits in the national movement, engendered by what they regarded as the utter futility of political agitation along the lines hitherto pursued. Year after year the cry of the Congress went unheeded, its ponderous resolutions were contemptuously looked upon as the demands of noisy agitators or impatient idealists. The new Party would, therefore, have nothing to do with the "policy of mendicancy" of the Congress and its veteran leaders. The Deccan and Bengal were the two principal centres of the new gospel that was preached from the Press and platform by an ever-increasing band of youthful and aggressive politicians under the inspiration of men like Messrs. Bepin Chandra Pal, Arabindo Ghosh, and that stormy petrel of Indian politics, Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The first manifestations of the new spirit, so far as it affected the national movement embodied in the Congress, were evidenced at Benares in

1905, when Mr. Gokhale was in the chair. Anticipating trouble, he had wired to Chimanlal Setalvad, insisting upon Pherozeshah's presence at the session, as, without him there was a real danger of the Congress being committed to wild and impossible positions. Mr. Gokhale felt convinced that the proceedings would end harmoniously, and Pherozeshah's lead followed by an overwhelming majority if he was personally present. No serious injury was done to the Congress cause, however, in spite of Pherozeshah keeping away, though it was felt by many that his presence would have completely frustrated the partly successful attempts which the new Party had made to drag the Congress at its heels.

In the following year at Calcutta, the breach widened, and the differences between the two wings of the Congress became more acute. An open rupture was only prevented by the action of Pherozeshah, Gokhale and one or two other Moderate leaders in installing the Grand Old Man of India in the presidential chair. It was a happy inspiration. The presence of the venerable apostle of Indian nationalism, long past the patriarchal age, coming from a far-off land to render his last service to the people whom he loved so well, exercised a restraining influence on the noisiest Extremist, and prevented a definite split within the ranks. Even so, the bark of the Congress was driven to perilous waters, and violent storms threatened to engulf it. The fight centred round the resolution about Boycott, though agreement on the other resolutions on Self-Government, Swadeshi and National Education was not reached without a bitter struggle between the two contending forces. The Bengali contingent aided by a section from Nagpur and the Deccan wanted to justify the use of Boycott as a political weapon, and to extend its operation to other provinces. The Moderate wing under the leadership of Pherozeshah, fought tooth and nail to prevent the good work of the Congress from being discredited by a resolution which breathed a spirit of vengeance and defiance, and they succeeded in whittling it down to an approval of Boycott as a measure of protest justified by the Partition of Bengal.

Stormy scenes marked the passage of the Boycott resolution in the Subjects Committee. Pherozeshah and others were grossly insulted, and even the revered Dadabhai did not escape the shafts of

Extremist invective. The wilder elements in the new party shouted and raved, and finally, headed by Bepin Chandra Pal and his lieutenant Khaparde, left the meeting in a body. The Congress was saved, however, and the much debated resolutions were passed with some show of unanimity.

The tactics of the Extremist section excited considerable indignation and disgust in the older generation of Congressmen, who had nurtured the national movement in the face of obloquy, ridicule and indifference, and had not lost their faith in the ultimate triumph of their cause. The insult offered to Pherozeshah, whom the Extremists hated and feared as their most formidable opponent, was particularly resented by his political associates in every province, who had marched under his banner ever since his commanding talents marked him out as a leader of men. Bhupendranath Basu, one of the 'Old Guard,' writing to Pherozeshah from Calcutta gave expression to the deep sense of humiliation, which was felt by him and many of his friends, at the rudeness displayed by some of the truculent young politicians of Bengal towards one who was "by common consent the leading statesman and politician in India." Such manifestations after 22 years of the Congress made him, he said, lose all faith in the future of their national life. Had the Congress been a failure in bringing them to a higher level and placing a nobler ideal before the people? Basu was aware that Pherozeshah with his unconquerable optimism and inspiring faith would deny the charge, for he had too stout a heart to be troubled by the contemptible manifestations of impotent malice and spite which were so much in evidence in Calcutta.

This feeling expression of regret from an old and valued colleague must have consoled Pherozeshah for any momentary annoyance he felt at the insolence and egregious folly of the youthful politicians who worshipped at the shrine of Tilak and Pal, and imbibed the political philosophy preached in the columns of *The Kesari* and *Bande Mataram*. He was too much of an optimist to be oppressed by the signs and portents of the new spirit, which was fast catching hold of the imagination of the younger generation. He saw the times that were coming, through the persistent and contemptuous disregard of public opinion, which seemed to be the settled

policy of the vast majority of those who ruled the country. Firm in his own principles, however, and convinced as he was of the utter futility of a gospel of violence, he resolved to fight the new doctrines with the same uncompromising vigour with which he had fought oppression and injustice wherever he had met them. Other men shrank back, or coquetted with the new forces at work. Not so Pherozeshah, who strenuously endeavoured all along to keep the national movement in the paths of moderation and sanity, wherein alone, he was convinced, lay the salvation of his country. The role that he played in those momentous days, drew forth a tribute even from so unfriendly a critic of Indians as Sir Valentine Chirol :<sup>1</sup>

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, a leading Parsee of Bombay, who had been drawn into co-operation with the Congress under the influence of the political Liberalism which he had heard expounded in England by Gladstone and Bright, played at this critical period an important part which deserves recognition. He was as eloquent as any Bengalee, and he possessed in a high degree the art of managing men. In politics he was as stout an opponent of Tilak's violent methods as was Mr. Gokhale on social and religious questions, and he did, perhaps, more than anyone else to prevent the complete triumph of Tilakism in the Congress right down to the Surat upheaval.

Immediately the Calcutta session was over, the apostles of the new cult started vigorous propaganda work throughout the country. Tilak opened the campaign at Allahabad in January, 1907, and he was shortly followed by his lieutenant Khaparde at Nagpur, where the ensuing Congress was to be held. The Moderate leaders were freely vilified by nationalist scribblers and orators, and were described as "the most debased of humankind." The work of preparation for the Congress at Nagpur was marked by the most disgraceful intrigues and scenes that ever disfigured the political annals of the country. Early in the year, when a meeting was held for the formation of the working committee, "a respected old C.P. leader of 60 years of age was greeted with a shoe, burning powder was sent in a

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Unrest*, p. 51.

letter to the president of the meeting, Dr. Gour, and threatening letters were sent to some other prominent men."

Activities such as these were kept up throughout the months that followed. The Extremists wanted Tilak in the presidential chair, and they had resolved to stick at nothing to secure their object. The Moderates, though in a majority, were no match for their opponents, either in organizing skill or in methods of political warfare. The Reception Committee, however, which had the right of selecting the President by a three-fourths majority, according to a resolution of the Calcutta Congress, succeeded in electing Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, an eminent Bengali lawyer and leader of thought, as President of the Nagpur Session. This selection was in accord with the views of almost all the provincial centres consulted in the matter.

The Extremists foiled in their purpose, resolved upon creating confusion and chaos, and rendering the work of the Congress impossible. And they succeeded only too well. The Chairman of the Reception Committee, Mr. Chitnavis, was assailed with abuse, the minds of the ignorant and the illiterate were inflamed by all sorts of discreditable suggestions, and the student world was carefully educated into an attitude of violent hostility to the methods and policy of the older leaders. The inevitable result was that at a meeting of the Reception Committee held on 22 September, such scenes of hooliganism were enacted as destroyed all possibility of holding the Congress in the surcharged atmosphere of Nagpur. Efforts were made by Pherozeshah and other Bombay leaders to effect a compromise, but the politicians of the new school had a slimness about them which defied all attempts at any definite settlement of the points at issue.

Finding that Nagpur was determined upon wrecking the Congress, Pherozeshah and his party reluctantly felt compelled to change the venue to some other place. At a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held at his house, it was decided to transfer the sittings to Surat, which had gallantly come forward to undertake the heavy responsibility of holding the Congress in her midst. The rage of the Extremists knew no bounds. Their newspapers and politicians showered unstinted abuse on the Moderate leaders, particularly

Pherozeshah, who was regarded as primarily responsible for the change of venue, and whose inflexible will and masterful personality they recognized as the greatest obstacle to the success of their manœuvres. Surat was jeered at as a sleepy hollow, and all sorts of threats were held out to those responsible for the arrangements for the forthcoming session.

The good people of Surat rose valiantly to the occasion, however, and the work of preparing for the Congress proceeded briskly. It seemed for a time as if the tactical move of Pherozeshah would prove an unqualified success, and the Congress would yet be saved; but the Moderates reckoned without their host. Tilak started the campaign at Surat with a denunciation of the change of venue, which was grossly misrepresented and this, as Gokhale stated, "without even the excuse of ignorance, since he was personally present at the meeting of the Committee, and knew exactly what had taken place." His next move was the commencement of an agitation to put up Lala Lajpat Rai in place of Dr. Ghosh, whom the Surat Reception Committee had unanimously elected, and whose appointment was in all respects valid and could not be challenged. This manœuvre was thwarted by the patriotic Lala himself, who declined to be disloyal to his erstwhile colleagues, and did not take the bait. The name of Mr. Aswini Kumar Dutt of Barisal fame was afterwards put forward. When it was found that this cry fell somewhat flat, another stunt was thought of by the ingenious politicians of the Deccan. About a week before the meeting of the Congress, the story was sedulously circulated that the Reception Committee had decided to jettison the decisions of the Calcutta Congress. The circumstance that the Resolutions, which were entrusted to Gokhale for drafting were not forthcoming till the last day, was cleverly utilized for investing the rumour with an air of plausibility. It was in vain that personal assurances were given by Gokhale and others that the Reception Committee had no such intentions as were attributed to them,—an assurance which was superfluous in view of the fact that it was, after all, the Subjects Committee which was master of the situation. The draft resolutions, it may be added, were actually placed in the hands of Tilak a little before the Congress met; but he and his friends turned the blind eye to the telescope.

The Extremist contingent arrived a couple of days before the appointed date, and entrenched itself in a separate camp of its own. Its members came mostly from the Deccan, Berar and Bengal. According to the testimony of the late Mr. R. N. Mudholkar, one of the most respected of the old Congressmen, who lived to be appointed the first President of the Central Provinces Legislative Council, the delegates and visitors from Berar included gymnastic teachers, proclaimed touts, workmen from factories, fitters, oilmen *et hoc genus omne*. It was said that there were even some barbers from Nagpur! However that may be, it was apparent that the crowd which marched under the banner of Messrs. Tilak and Khaparde and their allies from Bengal, would not hesitate to employ stronger measures if everything else failed. They had come well primed, and their spirits were continually kept up by conferences at which Tilak and his lieutenants waxed indignant over what they described as the crooked ways and questionable tactics of their opponents. All this while, individual leaders on both sides carried on negotiations, which, however, led to nothing, for one of the two contending parties had no intention of settling the differences in a peaceful and constitutional manner.

At length the fateful 27 December arrived. The Congress met in a *pandal* erected in the old historic French Garden, which had been turned into a vast camp for the occasion. Over 1,600 delegates and 5,000 visitors were present. There was suppressed excitement in every face, and the scene was one of unusual animation:

The whole air was full of suspicion. The mere choice of Surat for the Congress after Nagpur was abandoned—how suspicious that was. Surat too close a neighbour to Bombay, the very stronghold of Bombay Moderates—Parsis, mere Parliamentarians, unredeemed by the fire of sacrifice, men who would make the best of both worlds, men who took titles from an alien Government! It was in Surat that Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had founded his fortunes. Now he dominated all the West Coast, all the Presidency of Bombay, and here was seen with Mr. Dinshaw Edulji Wacha, most statistical of Parsis, himself President of the Calcutta Congress in 1901. All the other obedient satellites were circling round

him too, bent on conciliating a government that answered conciliation with titles or contempt. Was a National Congress to be manipulated by mitred Parsis? It was all very well to plead Sir Pherozeshah's services to India in the past in the days when as a disciple of Ranade himself he had stood almost alone against the bureaucracy, had displayed a courage equal to Mr. Gokhale's, an eloquence hardly second to Surendranath's, a power of sarcasm hardly rivalled by Moti Lal's; had been chosen President for the young Congress in 1890; had conquered for Indians the control of the Bombay Corporation; had converted his city into a model of local government; had swept her slums and purged her administration. To the suspicious Nationalist, these things were nothing new. They belonged to the past, to the scrapheap of dead reputations. The crisis called for other arms, other methods.<sup>2</sup>

It was a remarkable scene that met the visitor's eye. An air of restlessness, a feeling that something unusual was going to happen, seemed to pervade the vast assembly. Here and there, some Extremist leader harangued little groups of men and kept alive the spirits of his audience. From time to time cheering broke out as some popular leader was sighted, the arrival of Lala Lajpat Rai in particular, arousing tremendous enthusiasm. At a little after 2-30, the President-elect arrived, accompanied by Messrs. Pherozeshah, Gokhale, Surendranath Bannerji and Tribhovandas Malvi, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, a respected citizen of Surat practising as a solicitor in Bombay. The drooping spirits of the Moderates revived as they saw the hearty welcome accorded to Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh. When everyone had taken his seat on the platform, on which one noticed among the men of light and leading from every province, Dr. Rutherford, one of the friends of India in Parliament, and Mr. Nevinson of the *Daily News*, some patriotic songs were sung, and at their conclusion Mr. Malvi delivered his address of welcome to the delegates. He was heard in comparative silence, occasionally interrupted by shouts of dissent when he pleaded for moderation.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Nevinson's *The New Spirit in India*, pp. 240-1.

As soon as he sat down, Diwan Bahadur Ambalal Sakarlal in a short speech formally proposed Dr. Ghosh to the chair. The veteran Surendranath Bannerji rose to second the proposition with that sonorous eloquence which once had delighted thousands of his countrymen. At the moment, however, the hero of a hundred platforms, stood discredited in the eyes of a certain section of his compatriots, who had fallen foul of him over the Midnapur Conference, and who denounced him for the growing moderation of his views. Hardly had he opened his lips, when a section of the audience began to shout and create a disturbance which quickly grew into a violent tumult. Calls were made for Mr. Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, and the speaker was sought to be shouted down. The insult offered to the eminent leader of Bengal, roused the indignation of most of the delegates, and half the audience were on their chairs shouting and howling against the moving spirits of the disturbance.

At this stage, the distracted Chairman of the Reception Committee got upon the table, and declared that he would be obliged to suspend the sitting, if order were not speedily restored. Surendranath Bannerji thereupon attempted to resume his speech from the elevated position which Mr. Malvi had occupied, but a regular pandemonium greeted his fresh effort. The audience got utterly out of hand. Excited individuals mounted the platform, scrambling across the chairs in the way, and offered to eject the rowdies by force. At 3-30 the meeting was suspended, and the leaders from the various provinces considered the position for a while. Mr. Nevinson offered to address the meeting if it were likely to still the clamour, but it was thought too late to have any effect. The Bengal leader made a further attempt to speak, but the only result was renewed obstruction, and the meeting had to be abandoned for the day.

After the suspension of the Congress, an infuriated crowd of delegates and visitors followed Mr. Tilak and shouted "Traitor! Traitor!" There was considerable excitement everywhere, and peaceful Surat presented an unusually animated appearance. Late in the evening, a manifesto was issued over the signatures of about twenty of the leading Congressmen in all parts of the country, appealing for orderly behaviour, and pointing out the humiliation of the situation and the disgrace it would bring to the country if the sitting of the

Congress had to be altogether abandoned. Many among the sane and sober elements in the Congress were hopeful that the appeal would not fall on deaf ears, and till late in the night efforts were made to ensure the smooth conduct of the proceedings on the ensuing day.

At 1 p.m. on the 27th December, the Congress met again. As the President-elect was marching up to the *dais*, he was accorded an enthusiastic welcome by the vast majority of those present, which put heart into his supporters, and greatly restored their confidence. While the procession was entering, a small slip of paper was put in the hands of Mr. Malvi. It stated :

Sir,—I wish to address the delegates on the proposal of the election of the President after it is seconded. I wish to move an adjournment with a constructive proposal. Please announce me.

Yours sincerely,

B. G. TILAK,

Deccan Delegate (Poona).

The Chairman hurriedly read this ominous message, and put the slip in his pocket. The proceedings were resumed at the point at which they had been interrupted, and Surendranath Bannerji was quietly allowed to finish his speech, the Poona and Nagpur Extremists listening in sullen silence. Pandit Motilal Nehru having duly supported the motion, the Chairman put it to the vote, and an overwhelming majority having shouted their assent, the motion was declared to have been carried. Dr. Ghosh thereupon took the chair amidst loud and prolonged cheering from his supporters in all parts of the *pandal*. As he rose to deliver his address, up went Mr. Tilak on the platform, stood in front of the President, and demanded to be heard, as he had given notice of an amendment. The Chairman of the Reception Committee pointed out that he could neither ask for an adjournment of the Congress at that stage, nor move an amendment to the election of the President, which had been duly passed. Mr. Tilak thereupon began to argue with Dr. Ghosh, who explained to him that he was out of order. He refused to submit to the ruling, however, and declared he would appeal to the delegates.

While this argument was taking place on the platform, the audience was already in a tumult. The rank and file of the Extremists were repeating their performance of the day before, and the rest of the audience was hurling imprecations on them and their leader. The unfortunate President tried to ignore the tempestuous scenes occurring before him, and made valiant attempts to be heard above the din and tumult, and repeatedly appealed to Mr. Tilak, who was all the while loudly insisting on his right to move the amendment, to resume his seat. Dr. Rutherford and several others endorsed the appeal. But the Extremist leader just folded his arms on his chest, and declined to go back unless he was bodily removed. It was with difficulty that the Moderate leaders could dissuade their exasperated following from forcibly laying hands on him and chucking him out.

Matters were now assuming an ugly aspect. The well-disciplined ranks of Poona and Nagpur with the *lathis* in their hands, with which they had thoughtfully provided themselves, were making a rush at the platform. The President realized the hopelessness of the situation, and appealed for the last time to the determined man with the folded hands who would not be denied a hearing. But the appeal went unheeded. At this moment a Deccani shoe was hurled from the audience on to the platform, and grazing the Bengali hero fallen from grace, struck Pherozeshah on the face. Pandemonium ensued; chairs were thrown at the *dais*, sticks were freely used, and more than one man on the platform was roughly handled. Pherozeshah seemed to excite in a particular degree the wrath of the hooligans, many of whom were supposed to be educated men. In the tumult, some of the Nagpur contingent rushed at him shouting, "We want to punish these Parsee rascals." The scene may be described in the language of Mr. Nevinson, who was present throughout, a keenly-interested spectator:

Suddenly something flew through the air. A shoe!—a Mah-ratta shoe!—reddish leather, pointed toe, sole studded with lead. It struck Surendranath Bannerji on the cheek; it cannoned off upon Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. It flew, it fell, and as at a given signal, white waves of turbaned men surged up the escarpment of

the platform. Leaping, climbing, hissing the breath of fury, brandishing long sticks, they came, striking at any head that looked to them Moderate, and in another moment, between brown legs standing upon the green-baize table, I caught glimpses of the Indian National Congress dissolving in chaos.

There was no help for it now but to suspend the Congress *sine die*, which the President did amidst scenes of indescribable confusion. The ladies in the audience were hastily taken away to a place of safety. Mr. Tilak was borne off by his followers. Pherozeshah, Gokhale and others were escorted out of the place by a back entrance. Free fighting continued to rage in the *pandal*, however, and the police had ultimately to come in, and clear the gathering.

It was an unforgettable, and to most of the old leaders, an unnerving experience. In a tent outside, to which a hurried advance had to be made, they stood, flushed and angry, and unable to think clearly of the situation that had arisen. Poor sensitive Gokhale trembled with excitement and indignation. Almost alone among the old leaders, Pherozeshah walked about calm and unmoved. Not all the execrations and calumnies directed against him for months past, not even that Deccani shoe were able to impair the robust confidence of the man, or affect his clarity of vision or political judgment. Interviewed shortly afterwards, he smiled and said he knew it was coming very soon, and that he was inclined to regard it as a blessing in disguise. The Congress would emerge stronger and healthier from the ordeal, and would not be dragged at the heels of the noisy politicians who threatened to destroy its reputation for moderation and sanity. The separation was inevitable, unless the Congress was to submit to the rule of the Extremists. He was glad the Moderates had managed to avoid the grand mistake of using force against Mr. Tilak, and had thus placed the onus of the split on him.

The proceedings at Surat were commented upon at length by most of the London Papers. *The Daily News* hoped that the fiasco might do good, and declared that the failure of the Moderates was due to the slow pace and grudging scope of reforms in the administration. True to its great traditions, it urged the adoption of a policy of restoring faith in British wisdom and justice. *The Tribune*, the

newly-founded organ of Liberalism, was of opinion that the conduct of the Extremists would effect a reaction favourable to the constitutional side of the national movement. On the other hand, *The Standard* thought the events at Surat would convince people, that the Congress, when not actively mischievous, was the exact representation of what an Indian National Parliament would be, *viz.*, a political bear-garden.

On the evening of the memorable day, which saw the break-up of the session, a large number of leading delegates met in Pherozeshah's quarters to consider what steps should be taken to continue the work of the Congress. It was resolved to hold a Convention the next day of all those delegates to the Congress, who were agreed that the attainment by India of self-government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire was the goal of Indian aspirations, that the advance towards this goal was to be by strictly constitutional means, and that all meetings held for the promotion of these aims and objects were to be conducted in an orderly manner with due submission to the authority of those who were entrusted with the power to control their procedure. A manifesto was accordingly issued over the signatures of Rash Behari Ghosh, Pherozeshah, Surendranath Bannerji, Gokhale, Wacha, Madan Mohan Malaviya and most of the leading men from the various provinces assembled in Surat.

The Convention was held on 28 December in the *pandal*, where two days before *lathis* and shoes and broken chairs had been freely flying about. The delegates to the Convention were required to sign a declaration before tickets were issued to them for admission. For further precaution, volunteers were posted at the gates, who excluded known agitators without offering them an opportunity of signing the declaration. An ample force of police was in guard at the place, ready for any surprises which the Poona and Nagpur contingents might spring upon the gathering.

In moving the election of Dr. Ghosh to the chair, Pherozeshah observed that he had once spoken from the Congress platform of an unconventional Convention for the purpose of promoting the interests of the country. He did not think then that in process of time, they would have to meet in the form of a Convention, for the

purpose of resuscitating the work which had gone on for 23 years with the co-operation of all the provinces. The motion was seconded by Surendranath Bannerji, and supported by Lala Lajpat Rai. There was only one resolution on the agenda paper, and it was moved by Gokhale. It declared that the object of the Convention lay chiefly in the first two articles of the Declaration already signed by the delegates, and in reviving the Congress in accordance with its terms. A committee was appointed to draft a constitution. It may be mentioned in passing that it met at Allahabad in April 1908, settled the constitution, and passed a set of rules for the conduct and regulation of Congress meetings. The creed of the Congress so settled was to be subscribed to unconditionally by every delegate.

Thus ended the first chapter in the history of the Indian National Congress. On an impartial consideration of all the facts and arguments bearing on the subject, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the wreck of the session at Surat was carefully planned and deliberately carried out. A telegram had been received from the Extremist headquarters at Calcutta which said, "Blow up, if everything else fails," and every manœuvre in the game shows how the mandate was carried out. The Extremists published their version of the affair shortly after the break-up of the Congress. On a comparison of it with the account issued by the officials of the Congress, the statement published by Gokhale, and the testimony of many impartial observers, one is sorrowfully led to conclude that the Extremist manifesto 'handles the truth very careless.'

The part that Tilak played at this critical juncture in the history of the national movement was roundly condemned by a large section of public opinion, but it was characteristic of the man and in tune with his stormy political career.

It is true that differences of outlook and methods between the two parties made an early rupture inevitable. The Extremists had charted the seas and mapped out the course they were determined to pursue. The Moderates were equally determined to go along the path they had trodden with a dogged perseverance for many a year. At their head, supported by Gokhale and a band of able and loyal adherents, stood Pherozeshah, with his great skill in the handling of men and his unbending will in matters of principle. Such a dreaded opponent

could neither be converted nor crushed. Small hope, therefore, that the two parties could have evolved a common programme, or stood for long on a common platform. But the fight at Surat was not the natural outcome of a clash of principles. It was a piece of organized hooliganism, which brought a measure of discredit upon the national movement which clung to it for years. It also infused a bitterness into the political life of India, which had a baleful effect on the future course of events.

When the Extremists contemplated their handiwork on the morrow of that eventful session, it was to be overwhelmed with a feeling that a cardinal blunder had been committed. In the euphemistic language of Mr. Khaparde, "regret at the occurrences, irrespective of the causes that led to them, appeared to be universal, coupled with a desire that a *modus operandi* should be found to bring all concerned together, and arrange for an adjustment, honourable to all alike and calculated to further the cause of the Congress." The Nationalist party clearly saw that in wrecking the Congress, it had lost a powerful weapon for the furtherance of its political purposes, and it was anxious to repair the tactical mistake it had committed. Its first move was the appointment of a Congress Continuation Committee to revive the suspended session. These attempts at *rapprochement* were repeated at several provincial conferences. But the Moderates did not readily take the bait. The more discerning among their leaders realized the utter 'incompatibility of temperament,' and desired a complete divorce.

Their opponents, however, did not lose heart. They carried on a vigorous campaign in favour of a united Congress, and strove hard to show that the differences between the two parties were not irreconcilable. With their usual ingenuity, they set about proving the ultimate identity of aims and interests of both sections, and explaining away the points of cleavage. And they achieved a certain measure of success. Many among the ranks of the Moderate party felt inclined to listen to the soothing strains which emanated from the Nationalist organs. They forgot the injury which had been done to the cause and the insults to which they had been subjected, and were anxious to discover a common programme of action.

It was at this moment, when a mood of doubt and hesitancy was seizing even the sober and the thoughtful that Mr. Bhupendranath Basu wrote to Pherozeshah asking for an expression of his views on the proposed re-union of the parties. The reply was in the nature of a bomb-shell thrown in the camp of the Extremists. It was a crushing exposure of all the fallacies, misrepresentations and disingenuous arguments which were clouding the real issue, and was an inspiring call to the timid and the wavering to stand fast by their convictions. It started with a defence of the Creed of the Congress, which had been attacked in various quarters :

The events which took place in Nagpur and Surat, and the circumstances under which the Congress broke up in Surat make it now absolutely essential that the unwritten law on which the Congress was based from the very commencement, namely, that it was to be a legal and constitutional movement carried on by our organization which loyally accepted British rule, should be now put in express words, at once clear and unambiguous, unassailable by any such dialectical chicanery as was practised in the last Congress on the Boycott resolution, when the words agreed to as meaning one thing were attempted to be explained into another and a very different thing. It is no use shutting one's eyes to the fact within our own knowledge, (I can speak with authority as regards so-called Extremist leaders in the Bombay Presidency) that some secretly cherish the idea of using the Congress for aims and methods not altogether constitutional. It is impossible, therefore, to let any doubt exist as to the character of the Congress organization and movement.

The letter next referred to the question of the much-debated Calcutta Resolutions, the ostensible cause of all the woes of the Surat Congress. It was the little game of the party headed by Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal to pretend all along that these resolutions were in danger, and that the Moderates cherished the dark design of getting out of them at the earliest possible opportunity. They kept the cry up, with a cheerful disregard of the facts, even after the Surat split, and they were now demanding guarantees from prominent

Congressmen that these resolutions should form the inalienable planks of the Congress platform. Referring to this, Pherozeshah observed that he could not conceive anything more impudent than the demand in that behalf. The least examination of it betrayed its disingenuous character. It was an attempt to stop the Subjects Committee and the full Congress from discussing and deliberating on every subject that might be regularly brought before them, and deciding it according to their judgment. If, as was alleged, there was a majority in favour of the Calcutta Resolutions, surely that majority could carry them, both through the Subjects Committee and the Congress. If it was otherwise, such an agreement as was demanded was a monstrous attempt to impose the will of the minority on the majority.

Pherozeshah next dealt with the plea for a united Congress with characteristic courage and outspokenness. Said he :

I cannot help saying that there is a great deal of mawkish sentimentality in the passionate appeals for union at all cost. For my part, I think it is most desirable that each set of distinct convictions should have their separate Congress. To jumble them up in one body confuses the real understanding of the extent to which opinion really tends in one direction or another, and it is not possible to make out what are the dimensions of the cleavage and difference of opinion existing on any particular question. It is, therefore, desirable that persons holding nearly the same opinions and principles should organize themselves into bodies where they can expound them, and lay them before the public in a clear and consistent form. The public could then have the issue clearly before them, and their deliberate judgment can declare itself by the growing favour they would accord to any particular association. For God's sake, let us have done with all inane and slobbery whine about unity where there is really none. Let each consistent body of views and principles have its own Congress in an honest and straightforward way, and let God, *i.e.*, truth and wisdom judge between us all.

The letter was widely published, and was the topic of the hour everywhere. Sober politicians throughout the country admired its

manly tone and its strong common-sense. In equal measure, it received the condemnation of Extremist politicians, who were furious at what was undoubtedly a knock-out blow calculated to put an end to their little campaign. "Choice epithets of cultured Billingsgate," was the comment of one of their organs on the offending letter. The feeling in Bengal was particularly bitter. *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, which was never enamoured of Pherozeshah's politics, condemned the letter in unequivocal terms. Even the friendly *Bengalee* was constrained to record a protest:

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta has described the desire for a United Congress as mawkish sentimentality. We regret that he should have used this language in relation to a widespread and deep-seated sentiment which inspired the political world of Bengal. We regret it all the more, as coming from one who has numerous friends in Bengal and whose tact and judgment in dealing with delicate public questions is so well known. Bengal feels that a Sectional Congress is not a National Congress, and that a Sectional Congress has no right to speak in the name of the nation. If the Non-Conventionalists are willing to accept the Creed, and fight under the constitutional standard for the attainment of a goal which is perfectly constitutional, their exclusion from the Congress would be unjustifiable, and there is no reason why their legitimate demands should not be sympathetically considered. The spirit which we condemn in the Government is not the spirit that we should foster in the bosom of the Congress. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's language is strong, unconciliatory and, we are constrained to say, too masterful to suit the democratic temper of those who have been brought up amid the traditions of the Congress and the free public life of our province. But this is only a matter of style about which the writer must please himself.

There was another class of critics who read into the letter a confession of active disunity among the politically-minded classes in India, and advised the Moderates to tear themselves away from a movement which had ceased to be useful and national. *The Bombay Gazette* observed that the Congress was doomed as a representative

institution, and the sooner true and honest Moderates washed their hands of it, the better. *The Times of India* wrote that courage in Indian politics was rare, and surgical operations always painful; but it was convinced that the Congress would gain in power and influence if it had the courage to amputate the accretion, *viz.*, the Extremists, and if it carried on the work ready to its hand without fashions about the distant goal of colonial self-government, which was likely to form a weapon in the hands of the men who wrecked the Surat session, and who would rejoin the organization, signing every and any declaration only that they might divert the Congress from its old constitutional paths to their own methods of agitation.

As a result of the courageous stand taken by Pherozeshah, and in which he was supported by most of his old colleagues, the Congress which met at Madras in the following year under the presidency of Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, was able to keep out the Extremists, who were so anxious to regain their foothold. As the President in his address put it, their paths now lay wide apart, and a yawning gulf separated them. The Congress was ready to take the wayward wanderers back, but it could not and dared not extend the hand of fellowship to them, so long as they persisted in their present policy.

It is necessary at this point to anticipate matters a little, and to follow the fortunes of the Congress somewhat further on its onward journey. The Madras session had proved a success, and falsified the gloomy forebodings of hostile critics. The struggle was not at an end, however, and there were many in the camp of the Moderates, who were anxious to close up the ranks, and sighed for a united Congress. The next session was to be held at Lahore, and it was expected that a concerted opposition would be offered to the newly-framed constitution. A strong President was required in the circumstances, and the choice of the Provincial Congress Committees almost unanimously fell on Pherozeshah. The only dissentient voice was that of Bengal, which, more than any other province desired a *rapprochement*, and which did not relish the idea of having at the helm a resolute man who knew his own mind and had his own way of dealing with timidity and vacillation. At the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Hooghly in August 1910, the leaders of both sections had taken part, and attempted to prepare the ground for a

united Congress. The election of Pherozeshah by the Reception Committee in accordance with the votes of the Provincial Committees was, therefore, unpopular with Bengali politicians generally, as also with a few people in Lahore itself. There was every indication that the approaching session would be far from peaceful.

Matters were in this state, when one fine morning, just a fortnight before the due date, the country was startled by the news that Pherozeshah had suddenly resigned the Presidentship of the Congress. The telegram which conveyed the decision to Lala Harkishan Lal, Chairman of the Reception Committee, was as brief as it was enigmatic.

I deeply regret that owing to a combination of unexpected circumstances, I am compelled to relinquish the honour.

The country was bewildered. Not even the closest friends of Pherozeshah suspected his intentions, or could guess at the reasons which prompted this extraordinary step, which threw the Congress into utter confusion. The President-elect was as silent and mysterious as the Sphinx. The air became thick with rumours and surmises. Some said that Pherozeshah had lost faith in his former political followers and associates, and did not care again to run the risk of insult and molestation. Others concluded that "the deep political reasons supposed to underlie his action had no better foundation than a meticulous reluctance to preside over a Congress that bade fair to be either a frost or a riot." Yet others declared that while Pherozeshah was well aware of the strong feeling against him in certain circles, he accepted the Presidentship in the anticipation that the opposition would gradually evaporate in face of the settled fact. Finding that this was not the case, and that in fact only a very few days before, criticism had been strongly expressed, with characteristic impulsiveness he had suddenly decided to resign rather than occupy a position, his fitness for which was not acquiesced in by all parties. The Bombay correspondent of *The Capital* more charitable than others, declared that the Extremists would have turned the Congress at Lahore into a pandemonium if Pherozeshah had pronounced *ex catedra* the views he had expressed in his famous letter, and it was

to save the country an unseemly exhibition at a time when the reformed Councils had ushered in a new era which called for co-operation and good-will, that he had declined to go to Lahore.

Whatever the reasons, it is impossible not to criticize an action which dealt, what appeared to be for the time being at least, a shattering blow to the Congress cause. Though the 'silver-tongued orator' of Allahabad, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, gallantly stepped into the breach, and cheerfully responded to an eleventh-hour call, in spite of indifferent health, a chilling atmosphere pervaded Bradlaugh Hall, and damped the ardour of the somewhat thin assembly which had gathered to voice the nation's demands. A cloud seemed to hang over the session, and there was a general feeling of depression. For this result, the sudden and unusual step taken by Pherozeshah was largely responsible. In the words of a journal which had invariably fought under his banner, "the pilot whom the country had trusted as the fittest man to steer the barque to haven when gathering clouds betokened a tempest, suddenly abandoned his post, and left the ship to drift as it might over the troubled waters."

A stout and fearless fighter, the act was strangely inconsistent with the whole record of his life. From the day he had stood up bravely, while a very young man, in defence of the Crawford régime, against a host of hostile critics, he had never paltered with his convictions, or run away from a fight because the odds were against him, and it is hardly possible that on the present occasion he shrank from fear. But whatever the motives operating on his mind, it cannot be gainsaid that his decision was as unwise as it was unfortunate. There were trouble and unrest in the land, a wave of discontent was sweeping over the country, anarchism had reared its ugly head, and its bloody trail was steadily lengthening. The voice of reason and moderation had been silenced. In the counsels of Government, reactionary influences were at work, and repression was rampant, growing with the growth of the new forces that had arisen. Not even the Reforms seemed able to stem the tide of sedition and anarchy and the repressive legislation they brought in their train. At such a moment, it is easy to understand how anxiously India was waiting for a lead, for some weighty pronouncement on the attitude both of the Government and the people. But the lead

was never given, and the man best fitted to sound the note of reason and true statesmanship, and to inspire the country with his own robust optimism and his abiding faith in peaceful and ordered progress, with an abrupt gesture retreated into the background and left his following wondering and helpless.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE POLICE CHARGES ACT—THE MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS 1907-1909

It was an apt commentary on the aims and methods of the Caucus that the man whom it attempted to dethrone was able shortly afterwards to render a signal service to the Corporation, where his predominance had been regarded as mischievous by the puny men who resented it. In September 1907, the Police Charges Act was passed, and the curtain fell upon a drama which had dragged its weary length for nearly forty years. Thanks to the conciliatory spirit shown by Lord Lamington's Government, and the skilful handling of the Corporation by Pherozeshah, the longstanding dispute between the two bodies as to the apportionment of the charges for education, medical relief and the police was brought to a happy conclusion. All throughout the protracted and bitter struggle, Pherozeshah had played a notable part, and it was no small satisfaction to him that he was instrumental in bringing about a settlement satisfactory to both parties. It was, perhaps, the most outstanding achievement of his municipal career, and one upon which he could look back with legitimate pride.

By the Act of 1865, the whole cost of maintenance of the police force in Bombay was charged on the municipal fund. There was a somewhat vague proviso by which a proportion of the cost was to be borne by Government under certain conditions. This was the subject of constant wrangling between the two bodies, and the Corporation more than once had to appeal to the Government of India and the Secretary of State against the decisions of the local Government. In 1882, came the memorable resolution on local self-government with which the name of Lord Ripon will always be associated. It laid down that municipal bodies should be relieved altogether of the charges for the police over whom they practically exercised no control, and that an equal amount of expenditure on education and

medical relief should be transferred to them with as full control as might be expedient over the details of such expenditure. If this principle had been loyally accepted and promptly given effect to, the relations between the Government and the Corporation would not have been strained to breaking point, as they so often were. But the manner in which it was to be put into operation was the subject of acute differences, and the frequent negotiations which took place between the Government and the Corporation led to no satisfactory settlement.

The Act of 1888 failed to strike out a definite line of policy, and by providing that a certain proportion of the charges of the police was to be borne by the Municipality, kept alive a constant source of friction. No clear-cut agreement could be reached as to what exactly were the liabilities of the Corporation by virtue of this provision. It led to disputes about various items of expenditure incurred in connection with the maintenance of the police. Memorials were submitted by the Corporation from time to time, most of them drafted by Pherozeshah, who, also in his Budget speeches before the Council, constantly reminded the Government of the unfairness of many of the charges debited to the municipal exchequer. When a committee was appointed by Government in 1893, to report upon the proposals of the Commissioner of Police for an increase in the force which the experience gained during the Hindu-Mohamedan riots of that year had indicated as necessary, Pherozeshah, as the representative of the Corporation, took up a strong attitude, and insisted on being given an ample opportunity of scrutinizing the recommendations before them. When that was denied to him, he refused to sign the report, and submitted to the Corporation a scathing indictment of the methods and procedure of the Committee, which led to a lively encounter with its Secretary, Mr. James Campbell, a Civilian of notoriously reactionary views.

Such was the spirit of the relations between the Government and the Corporation on the question of the police charges. The differences on this subject affected the settlement of the policy with regard to education and medical relief, which also, as we have seen, was a fruitful cause of friction. Lord Lamington's Government were anxious to put a stop to these never-ending disputes and to meet the

wishes of the Corporation with respect to the transfer of liabilities. They, therefore, proposd to hand over to the Corporation the liability in respect of primary education and medical relief, and to relieve that body altogether of the police charges against which it had so long been clamouring.

The Corporation under the guidance of Pherozeshah accorded its general approval to these proposals. "The settlement of the Police charges is safe if you can manage the Corporation," Sir Steyning Edgerley wrote to Pherozeshah; and the Caucus-ridden Corporation had been managed after all. But there were several objectionable features which had to be re-cast in order to make the scheme more acceptable. These were the subject of discussions between the leaders of the opposing forces, and a satisfactory arrangement was at length arrived at. Sir Steyning Edgerley was a foeman worthy of his steel and it was no easy task for Pherozeshah to secure a complete understanding on the various points at issue. His knowledge of all the intricate bearings of the question was unequalled, and, as a local newspaper put it, "when the issue passed from polemics to compromise, Sir Pherozeshah faced the situation in a broad and statesmanlike spirit which powerfully aided a decision." The conspicuous part he played in bringing about a settlement was cordially recognized both in the Council and the Corporation.

The Bill was introduced in the Council in July 1907, and passed into law two months later. It was characterized by Pherozeshah as a "Bill to settle the differences between the Corporation and the Government." It did away with a constant source of friction between the two bodies, and as such was welcomed by all parties. The Corporation in the result has not gained financially by the arrangement in view of its daily growing liabilities with regard to primary education and medical relief. As Pherozeshah observed at the second reading of the Bill, however, when exchanges of this sort are effected, it is always difficult to say who will be the ultimate gainer, because the respective duties and functions are capable of indefinite extension and development. For one thing, the Corporation got by the Act full control over services which must be regarded as primarily municipal, and was rid of the obnoxious police charges which it resented, inasmuch as it had to pay the piper, while the Government called for

the tune. Above all, the settlement of this much-vexed question paved the way for a better understanding between the Corporation and the Government, so essential for the real progress of municipal administration. The Act may, therefore, be legitimately regarded as a notable example of peace by negotiation—‘a striking illustration of Lord Rosebery’s faith in two men meeting at an inn’—and as one of the most constructive achievements of Pherozeshah’s career.

## II

The tide of Liberalism which set in in Britain in the closing months of 1905 synchronized with the departure of Lord Curzon from India, and raised high the hopes of Indian reformers. It was an article of faith with Pherozeshah that the salvation of India lay with the Liberals, and he was never tired of emphasizing this point of view. Among the few who shared this opinion was Sir William Wedderburn, who on the morrow of the General Election, which resulted in the triumphant return of the great Party after ten years of wandering in the wilderness, had written to Pherozeshah pointing out the unique opportunity which had presented itself to India, through the return to Parliament of so many of her best friends, and through the presence for the first time of a large Labour element. Above everything else, a rare stroke of imagination had sent ‘Honest John’ to Whitehall and all India had hailed the appointment with enthusiasm. If the footsteps of that philosophic Radical were tactfully guided as between the bureaucracy on the one hand and the Extremist party on the other, Indian politicians were sanguine of seeing an early fulfilment of their cherished hopes and aspirations. Sir William was, therefore, anxious that Pherozeshah and other leading Indians should go over “to instruct and influence the Members of Parliament.” Advancing age and indifferent health, however, precluded the idea of Pherozeshah undertaking any such task. By habits and temperament, he was not fitted for active propaganda work of any sort. His strength lay in the art of managing men and in the faculty of guiding and controlling popular movements. As he grew older, his contact with the currents of national life became

less intimate, and his interests were more and more confined to the city of his birth, where he reigned supreme till the end of his days.

The proud privilege of actively serving India at what promised to be the threshold of a new era, was accorded, therefore, to a younger man, worthy in every way of shouldering the great responsibility. It was fortunate, indeed, for the country that it had at this juncture a politician of Mr. Gokhale's fine character and virile intellect to voice her aspirations and grievances before the British public. There was none in all India more fitted for the task. A good deal of spade work had already been done, but no definite shape had yet been given to the full national demands. When Mr. Gokhale returned from his first mission to England on the eve of the General Election in 1905, Sir William Wedderburn, Sir Henry Cotton, Mr. Herbert Roberts and others had asked him to get a Bill prepared in India for the further reform of the Legislative Councils, and to bring it with him on the occasion of his second visit. The Bombay Congress of 1904 had asked for the right to divide the Councils on financial matters as the next instalment of reform, and in the Bill which was proposed to be drafted this was to be definitely included, as also a demand for an increase in the number of elected members. Gokhale was anxious that Pherozeshah should draft the Bill, or in any event, revise it before it could be taken to England.

While these preparations were going on, the Government of India were not idle. Soon after his arrival in August 1906, Lord Minto took the initiative and appointed a small committee of his Council to consider among other matters the increase of the representative element in the Indian and Provincial Legislative Councils. He recognized the vast changes that had taken place in the world situation :

All Asia was marvelling at the victories of Japan over a European power. Their effects were far-reaching. New possibilities seemed to spring into existence, there were indications of a popular demand in China, in Persia, in Egypt and in Turkey. There was an awakening of the Eastern world, and though to outward appearances, India was quiet, in the sense that there was

at the moment no visible acute political agitation, she had not escaped the general infection.

Lord Minto was above all things anxious that the Government of India should not be put in the position of appearing to have their hands forced by agitation in this country or by pressure from Home, and he bent himself to the task with energy and good will. In due course, the reform proposals of the Government were published. They were found to have been conceived in a narrow spirit, and there was little in them of that spacious statesmanship which people associated with the name of John Morley. The position in India was becoming one of great difficulty. The forces of unrest and anarchism had grown in strength and violence, and brought in their train repressive legislation such as the country had never known. Among other measures, a Press Act was passed, introduced in the Council by the then Law Member, Sir S. P. Sinha, not yet on the highest rung of his remarkable political career, and warmly supported by Gokhale and the majority of his non-official colleagues. It is interesting to note, in passing, that on Gokhale's return to Bombay after the close of the session at which the Act was passed, Pherozeshah expressed strong disapproval of his attitude towards the measure. On Gokhale pleading helplessness in the face of the evidence produced by Government of the seditious character of many of the writings in the Indian Press, Pherozeshah replied with some vehemence that the non-official members had no business to support it even in spite of the plea of necessity. Government had never listened to the advice of the leaders of the people on matters of policy, and when it came to forging repressive legislation, they wanted the latter to share the responsibility and the odium. It was a great mistake, therefore, on the part of the Indian members of the Council to support the Press Act. They ought rather to have asked Government to go into the root causes of the violent propaganda preached in many of the Indian papers. Gokhale listened in silence, feeling, perhaps, that his leader was taking an extreme attitude.

The facts are that Gokhale did not actually support the Bill. He could not, however, conscientiously oppose its principles, in view of the wild writings in the Indian Press in those days. He moved many

amendments with a view to taking the teeth out of the Bill and opposed it during the first two readings. Even at the third reading, he spoke against it, but remained neutral when the voting came. That was in keeping with the assurance he had given to Sinha that he would not vote against it. Pherozeshah did not like even this qualified support and subsequent events were to vindicate the soundness of his judgment.

To resume our story of the events that led up to the Reforms, people were losing their faith in a Secretary of State who had inbibed his political philosophy from some of the greatest minds of the age, but who did not seem to differ very greatly in his methods from a sun-dried bureaucrat. The 'anger of the impatient idealist' did not appear, however, to move the philosophic Radical. In an admirable article contributed to the columns of *India*, Sir William Wedderburn pleaded for patience and forbearance. As Mr. Morley observed in a letter to him, it was "the first frank plea for giving me a chance that has yet come from the camp of the reformers either there or here." But with repression on one side, and a much-diluted dose of reforms on the other, the voice of reason had not much chance of being heard.

The original proposals were subjected to a great deal of useful and intelligent criticism. The Bombay Presidency Association sent in February 1908, a weighty and dignified representation drafted by Pherozeshah himself, analysing some of the reactionary features of the scheme before the country, *viz.*, the creation of Advisory Councils, the narrowness of the franchise in the Legislative Councils, the maintenance of official majorities and the denial of any share in the executive government of the country. If the Government of India really wanted to know the better mind of the country, they had ample material in this as well as numbers of other representations which reached them from all parts of the country. At the other end, the Secretary of State put himself in constant touch with the best exponents of the Indian point of view. The indefatigable Gokhale, the sagacious Wedderburn, and that noble statesman who was the first to breathe into India the impulse of freedom, the venerable Lord Ripon, were always at his elbow. Mr. Morley himself, though cautious and conservative at times, was resolute and

masterful, and faithful to those great principles which have made him one of the most inspiring figures in the political life of our time.

With such forces at work, the Morley-Minto scheme ultimately took shape as a liberal measure of reform calculated to conciliate the large body of responsible politicians in India. It succeeded in rallying the Moderates to the support of the Government, as its distinguished authors were anxious it should. A representative of *The Times of India* interviewed Pherozeshah on 18 December 1908, and asked him for his views on the scheme. The latter declared it was a very genuine effort, and he was more than pleased. It bore out what he had always maintained, namely, that any substantial step in reforming the constitutional machinery could only come from the Liberal Party. He found it difficult to conceive that any Conservative Government could have designed a measure of so liberal a character. The reforms proposed were substantial. The enlargement of the Councils was a long step in advance, but he was convinced it would be justified by the results. It would succeed in bringing the people into close touch with the everyday administration. There was one point, however, on which he wanted, not so much to sound a discordant note, as to combat a delusion which he found largely entertained. Referring to the Secretary of State's dictum that for many a day to come self-government for India was a mere dream, Pherozeshah observed:

With his usual caution, Lord Morley has remarked that the Parliamentary system in India was a goal to which he did not aspire. I venture to think that this might have been left unsaid, considering the upheaval throughout the whole of Asia. When Persia and China talk about representative government and parliaments, one does not care to say any particular seal of impotence on India. But I have always been against looking too far ahead. I have for a long time deprecated the fashion of talking of ideals. In India, at any rate, at present, let our aims and goals be practical, looking forward to the near future without troubling ourselves as to what may be the ultimate goal.

The *Recollections* of Lord Morley unfold a fascinating tale of a constitution in the making. They show us a remarkable intellect engaged in a task of infinite complexity, and refusing to be turned aside from it by counsels of timidity, or the clamour of vested interests. The achievement of his brilliant lieutenant ten years later has overshadowed the great work which Lord Morley, assisted by a Viceroy of singular honesty and steadfastness of purpose, accomplished amidst difficulties which cannot be adequately realized at the present day. But the historian of the future will place him high among the statesmen of his era.

Foremost among the men, who assisted in the birth of the new era, stood the tireless Gokhale. He had outlived the obloquy and ridicule of those unhappy days, when he was violently assailed by his political opponents for having retracted his statements when he had found himself in the wrong. His fine character, his lofty aims, his mastery of facts and his simple eloquence singularly fitted him to become the spokesman of his country, and exercised a powerful influence on the course of events at this juncture.

The share of Pherozeshah in the shaping of the Reforms was less direct, though equally decisive in many respects. The Aga Khan well put it when he said at the memorial meeting held in London in December 1915, that "he was a strong barrier against destructive tendencies, and did a great work for India in helping to form and guide a body of moderate opinion which encouraged Lord Morley and Lord Minto to shape their great reform scheme on liberalising lines." Wedderburn, Gokhale and other advocates of India's cause were in constant touch with him, and his clear grasp of principles and unique experience of public affairs invested his criticisms and suggestions with considerable importance. The Bombay correspondent of *The Capital* in an outburst of enthusiasm described the Morley-Minto Reforms as a personal triumph for Pherozeshah. After referring to the Indian Councils Act of 1892, he went on to say :

For seventeen years he was the most prominent and potent force in the vindication of the right and ability of Indians to share in the administration of their country. His genius inspired the

devotion and stimulated the endeavour of Mr. Gokhale. Between them they created a body of respectable public opinion which is the true justification of the Reforms Scheme of Lords Morley and Minto. It is not too much to say that Sir Pherozeshah Mehta is as completely identified with this great measure of relief as Daniel O'Connell with Catholic Emancipation. . . . I, therefore, regard the Reforms Scheme as a great personal triumph for Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. It is the fulfilment of the prophetic vision he had in the Congress tent at Calcutta nearly twenty years ago.

In the sense that Pherozeshah's was the driving force that gave strength and direction to the demand for political rights and privileges, and that his work on the Legislative Councils, the Corporation and the University was the best justification of the claims of Indians to be able to manage their own affairs, the tribute may well be regarded as a just appreciation of the man and his achievements. Lecky has said of Daniel O'Connell that "if he had never arisen, Emancipation would doubtless have been at length conceded, but it would have been conceded as a boon, and it would have been most certainly accompanied and qualified by the veto." It might with the necessary differences be said of Pherozeshah that if he had never arisen, the goal of responsible government would ultimately have been reached, but the measure of advance would have been halting and slow, and the wheels of progress would probably have run off the path of peaceful evolution.

The rules and regulations framed in connection with the Morley-Minto reforms were of a retrograde character, and robbed the scheme of much of its value and statesmanlike purpose. They hastened the demand which was to spring up within a very few years for a measure of self-government which would give the representatives of the people a real voice in the administration of the country's affairs—a vastly different thing from the opportunities of influencing the course of events which was practically what the Act of 1909 and the rules framed under it provided. Lord Minto, in the course of a notable speech delivered by him at the first meeting of the newly-formed Imperial Legislative Council held on 25th January 1910, had ventured to dogmatize in a typically official manner:

We have distinctly maintained that representative government in its Western sense is totally inapplicable to the Indian empire, and would be uncongenial to the traditions of the Eastern populations, that Indian conditions do not admit of popular representation, that the safety and welfare of this country must depend on the supremacy of British administration, and that supremacy can in no circumstances be delegated to any kind of representative assembly.

Little did he dream that within less than a decade India would be on the high road to the attainment of that very system of government which he regarded as totally inapplicable to Eastern conditions, and that the reforms which he had inaugurated and regarded as adequate for her needs for as long a time as one could see, would so soon have to give place to a much more ambitious scheme of self-government. Truly has Mr. Ramsay Macdonald observed, "the intention of reformers is nothing and the internal momentum of reforms is everything."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### LORD SYDENHAM AND THE UNIVERSITY 1909-1912

LORD Curzon had claimed for his Universities legislation that a new life for Higher Education in India had been born. But as with other ambitious schemes of that restless Viceroy, the work to which he had set his hand languished after his retirement, and many thorny questions remained unsettled. They formed a fruitful source of controversy a few years later when Sir George Clarke came out as Governor of Bombay, and decided to put the coping stone on Lord Curzon's work.

The new Governor lost no time in formulating his ideas and setting things in motion for carrying them into effect. Hostilities commenced with a letter from the Government to the University, dated 18 December 1908, which purported to be a reply to a request from the Senate to the Chancellor for advice regarding the changes necessary in the curriculum. The letter stated that radical reforms were necessary if the teaching of science and higher education generally were to be brought into harmony with modern requirements :

Viewed as a whole, the general result presents the appearance of patchwork, illogical in many respects and plainly inadequate to meet the demands of the present day. The Governor-in-Council did not propose to offer detailed criticisms, which the most cursory study of the University syllabus would suggest. It sufficed to point out that there were too many examinations and too many subjects in certain cases, that there was no proper division into well-ordered courses and rational continuity of study, and that consequently there had been a marked want of thoroughness. It naturally followed that the results of higher education in the Presidency had been disappointing. A high standard of excellence was rarely attained either on the Arts or on the Science side, and with too few exceptions, the University had not produced

graduates who had evinced capacity for original work in the various branches of knowledge.

The proposals which were formulated were, briefly, the abolition of the Matriculation and Previous examinations, college examinations being substituted in their places, the curtailment of the compulsory and the enlargement of the number of optional subjects; the strengthening of science courses and teaching generally; and a revision of the courses and subjects for the various university examinations. The Senate appointed in March 1909, a committee for considering and reporting on these proposals. The committee issued its report in October, but it was not till 15 January 1910, that the subject came up for discussion before the Senate, presided over by Sir Narayan Chandravarkar, then Vice-Chancellor. It was a curious report altogether. It was signed by six members, while the dissenting minute contained seven signatures !

When the report was placed before the Senate, Pherozeshah moved that the letter of the Government and the recommendations of the committee be recorded. Then followed a series of detailed propositions based on the report of the committee, which had negatived almost all the recommendations made by Government. In a speech which, at the end of an hour and a half, still remained unfinished, and which, "as a feat of endurance reflected equal credit on the audience and the orator," as was sarcastically observed by one of his critics, Pherozeshah vehemently criticized the attitude adopted by Government in dealing with the question. He condemned their interference in the work of the Senate as extremely undesirable, and as unwise as it was impolitic. He thought every Fellow of the Senate must to a certain extent feel that organized as that body was, it would be far better for the integrity and independence of the University to allow educationists to bring forward proposals in the first instance, and then send them to the Governor-in-Council for sanction. He put it to them whether it was not right, wise and constitutional that they should be allowed without any direct interference from Government to work out the principles and details of the educational system in a manner that was considered to be best by the deliberate and collective wisdom of that body.

Having protested against the procedure, Pherozeshah proceeded to criticize at length the various positions taken up in the letter of the Government, and the attitude adopted by the dissenting members of the committee, particularly by Mr. Fardunji Dastur, Registrar of the University and a mathematician of some repute, who had attacked the old system as having turned out "mere smatterers and crammers and pedants," and encouraged the growth of a class of "noisy encyclopædic gramophones." At the close of his speech, Pherozeshah defined his own attitude towards University reform. He said the end and aim of education was the acquisition of knowledge and the training of the intellect so that knowledge might be properly and efficiently used. He was free to admit he was not quite satisfied with the output of the University; but they must adapt means to ends, and find out the real reasons which prevented further improvements, and the measures that were necessary for effecting them. It was no use relying upon curricula. The mischief was much deeper, and he hoped the Senate and everybody interested in education would bear in mind that educational progress depended not upon the number of University examinations or the courses of study in colleges, but upon the condition of the High Schools. They must be manned and equipped in the way in which they were equipped in other parts of the world.

After a protracted debate which occupied three sittings, the first part of Pherozeshah's motion for recording the Government letter and the report of the committee was carried. Then came the fight over the various propositions moved by him, particularly with regard to the Matriculation examination, which he was strongly for retaining, and which Government and their supporters in the Senate were desirous of abolishing. In replying to the discussion, Pherozeshah compared it with an imaginary debate on the abolition of the institution of matrimony, and asked whether it would be right to do away with such an institution because it was not free from defects and disadvantages. It is not possible to say how many votes this homely argument captured, but the majority in favour of the proposition was very large, and the ill-fated examination, the sport of warring factions, for the time being at least, escaped the destructive zeal of the reformer.

Soon after this Pherozeshah left for Europe, and did not return till the beginning of the following year. The opportunity was too good to be missed, and Mr. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, who was the official mouth-piece of the Government, brought up again before the Senate all the proposals originally formulated by Government, excepting the abolition of the Matriculation, and in October 1910, they were adopted "with such modifications as were needed to make the transition to a new period smooth and continuous." A committee was appointed to frame detailed regulations for the Arts courses. The unfortunate P.E. was left alone for the time being. It did not survive long, however, and on 25 January 1913, it too received its death-warrant.

The next stage in the proceedings was when the committee appointed to revise the Arts courses submitted its report to the Senate, which considered it on 17 July 1911. A considerable amount of heat was engendered on this occasion by the reactionary proposal to drop the study of English history from the list of compulsory subjects in the B.A. examination. It was moved by Mr. Natarajan, the talented editor of the *Indian Social Reformer*, and all the forces of Government were arrayed in support of it. A whip had been issued, and a machine-made majority had gathered obedient to the call to carry out the behests of a reactionary Governor. Considering the many foolish and mischievous remedies which British administrators in their wisdom have prescribed for the growing ills of India's political life, the opponents of the proposal before the Senate might be forgiven for suspecting that it was conceived not in the interests of education, but from motives of expediency. The bureaucratic imagination had taken fright at the idea of raw youths being fed on the noble story of the struggle for freedom which enriches the pages of English history. Away, therefore, with such pernicious literature, in the blessed name of specialization!

Pherozeshah was vehemently opposed to the change. The manner in which it was sought to be introduced was calculated to prevent the Senate from approaching the consideration of the question on its merits. Gokhale had alluded to the 'whip,' and the Director of Public Instruction had replied by asking whether Pherozeshah had never issued one. The latter indignantly repudiated the suggestion:

Mr. Sharp will be surprised to hear that in the course of a public career which has extended over 40 years, not only in this University, not only in the Municipality, but also in the Legislative Councils of this country, both Imperial and Provincial, there has never been a time when I have issued a whip. And why? Because I was brought up in the historical traditions of the great beings who have guided the educational history of this Presidency, whose antecedents and traditions have been respectfully watched by people like me, and who have always taught us that in a body constituted like the Senate of the University, it was wrong, improper and objectionable to issue a whip.

As for specialization, Pherozeshah continued, the highest educational authorities in England and America and on the Continent maintained that it must come at a later stage, and must be founded on a broad and general culture. This was also the opinion of one of the greatest educationists in the Presidency, Dr. Selby, who, in his Convocation address as Vice-Chancellor, had said a few years before that the enemy that he spied in the future was the specialist and the advocate of exclusive specialization. Pherozeshah was emphatically of opinion that if the Senate specialized in the manner in which they were asked to do, they would be emasculating the growth and culture of the students trained under such a system. The study of English History was of paramount importance to the people, and particularly to the rising educated classes of this country. Not all the eloquence, incisiveness and readiness of argument of the speaker, which had so often turned defeat into victory, were able, however, to influence the serried ranks which the mandate from the Chancellor had brought together, and the proposal of Mr. Natarajan was carried.

A few months afterwards, Pherozeshah attempted to re-open the subject, when the revised regulations for the B.A. examination, recommended by the Syndicate, were placed before the Senate for adoption. He wanted to take the opportunity for moving an amendment for the inclusion of English History in the compulsory group. The Vice-Chancellor ruled the amendment out of order. Pherozeshah wanted to be heard before the point was decided, and he made

more than one attempt to speak. But the Vice-Chancellor was obdurate, and declined to allow Pherozeshah to address him with regard to his ruling.

The incident was unfortunate, and with a little tact might have been avoided. The Vice-Chancellor might well have shown greater consideration than he did to a colleague who had rendered distinguished services to the University, and who was fighting against considerable odds for what he believed to be the best interests of higher education. The ruling led to a somewhat unpleasant controversy, which inevitably assumed a personal aspect, and which certainly did not add to the reputation of the Senate or the parties concerned. On July 1912, Pherozeshah moved for a committee for the purpose of revising the regulations of the University with regard to the conduct of business. He said that the rules as they existed were of a most cumbrous, impracticable and unintelligible character, and often tied down the hands of the Senate. One of them provided that no speeches should be made on a point of order, and that the chairman should be the sole judge. With regard to that he submitted that even the Speaker in the House of Commons not only allowed members to speak on a point of order, but also invited them to assist him in arriving at a proper conclusion, and himself gave reasons for his rulings on particular occasions. *The Times of India* had stated that there was an impression abroad that the proposition was intended as an attack on the Vice-Chancellor, and that it could hardly believe that Pherozeshah would allow his personal irritation to lead him to make a proposal so fraught with chaotic consequences. The mover scornfully repelled the charge. He scarcely thought that any responsible editor would descend to such an unworthy insinuation, and he asked members of the Senate not to be carried away by this attempt to prejudice the proposition which he had placed before them on the unanimous recommendation of the Syndicate.

The discussion which followed was not of an edifying character. Personal motives were freely imputed to Pherozeshah by several speakers. Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, the first Indian Doctor of Laws of the Bombay University, and an Oriental Scholar of considerable reputation, so far forgot himself as to charge the mover of the

proposition with employing obstructive tactics where Indian Vice-Chancellors were concerned. Replying to the debate, Pherozeshah observed that in the course of a long public life, he had learnt to receive knocks—and sometimes they were hard knocks—with equanimity and cheerfulness, and sometimes also with enjoyment. It was, however, with great pain that he heard Sir Ramkrishna charge him, who had always stood up for Indians, with something as devoid of foundation as of truth, and it was all the more painful to him that the Vice-Chancellor should not have said one word of expostulation or reproach. He had been attacked in several quarters with having introduced a personal feeling into the matter. But he had assured them on more than one occasion that he had been actuated by honest and conscientious motives, and he had always admitted that the Vice-Chancellor, whether he agreed with him or differed from him, had endeavoured to do what he considered to be his duty. Everybody knew the esteem and friendship with which the speaker had for years regarded Sir Narayan. Was he to be told that because he happened to differ from the latter, and wanted to discuss those differences, that he was actuated by personal feeling?

The proposition on being put to the vote was carried by 38 votes to 30, and an end was put to a most unpleasant controversy. That it did not leave any bitterness behind was due to the dignified and conciliatory tone of Pherozeshah's speech in reply, and to the admirable temper preserved by the Vice-Chancellor, who had made it clear from the beginning that having regard to his relations with his old leader, he would not mind any criticisms coming from him, for they would not be misunderstood.

The various other 'reforms' on which Lord Sydenham had set his heart were carried at later meetings of the Senate, and the long-drawn battle ended, in which the honours went to the vanquished and the spoils to the victor. The High Priest of the Indo-British Association had triumphed over the leader whose personality had dominated the Senate, until the Universities Act altered its character and made it more amenable to official control. It would, of course, be absurd to suggest that the changes inaugurated had nothing to recommend them, or that those who supported them had all been inspired with the sinister motive of making higher education serve

the ends of those in authority. If the reforms had been introduced with due regard to the objections and susceptibilities of those whose advice and experience were entitled to respect, some of them at least might have commanded the assent of the opposition; but from the very first it was clear from the procedure that was adopted, that it was going to be a duel between the forces of the Government on one side, and those of the 'popular' party in the Senate on the other. It was not a case of a Chancellor asking an independent and unbiased Senate in the exercise of his right as head of the University to consider his suggestions for reform. It was a Governor steeped in bureaucratic traditions who was dictating the type of education which he thought the University ought to adopt. With such an unfortunate beginning, it would have been strange if the course of educational reforms had run smooth. However much sophists might explain it away, Pherozeshah was thoroughly in the right in representing as he did an undoubted encroachment upon the integrity and independence of the Senate—resentment which was shared, among others, by one of the most distinguished educationists of the day, the Reverend Dr. Mackichan, Principal of the Wilson College, who regarded it as an inversion of the University procedure for the Government to submit to the Senate a set of proposals for its approval. That was a constitutional issue, and it coloured the whole proceedings in a way which rendered a dispassionate examination of the main question somewhat difficult. To a man of Pherozeshah's sturdy independence and deep-rooted reverence for constitutional forms and formalities, it seemed to be an intolerable position that any changes which the times might demand should be imposed from above, and he never seemed to be quite able to get away from the influence of that idea. Then there was that innate conservatism, which strangely enough in a man who had fought for progress all his life, made him on many occasions a determined foe of all violent changes. For all that, Pherozeshah's views on many of the proposals before the Senate were marked by his characteristic common-sense and by a wide acquaintance with educational problems. He seldom fought better. His great debating powers, resourcefulness and dialectical skill were rarely displayed to better advantage than when he was fighting a battle which he knew was lost. Lord Sydenham with

the aid of an officialized majority triumphed for the time being over his formidable opponent. He failed, however, to dislodge him from the position he occupied, and the great leader lived to be appointed as the administrative head of that very body in which his influence had been sought to be discounted by narrow-minded men intolerant of opposition.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### VISIT TO EUROPE

1910-1911

FEW men had led such a crowded life as Pherozeshah, and the strain of it began to tell increasingly as he approached the Psalmist's 'three score and ten.' His regular habits and frequent visits to Matheran and other hill stations had enabled him all these years to maintain his strength and activities; but prolonged and complete rest was necessary to a man who was required to be in the thick of the fight in every place. Since his last trip to Europe in 1897, he had not enjoyed much rest, or known a real holiday. It was necessary for him to tear himself completely away from his surroundings, and to get away to a place where the dust and heat of political controversy might not affect him. He decided accordingly to leave for Europe in the summer of 1910.

There was a general desire to give him a public entertainment before his departure, and a representative committee was formed for carrying out the arrangements. The entertainment came off on 18 April 1910, in the spacious grounds of the Princess Mary Victoria Gymkhana at Colaba, tastefully decorated for the occasion, and was very largely attended by men and women of all communities. Lord Sydenham conveyed his regrets at being unavoidably absent, and felt confident that "the universal appreciation of Sir Pherozeshah's eminent services to Bombay" would ensure the success of the entertainment. A letter was also received from the venerable Dadabhai Naoroji, which stated that "for his great services to the city as well as to the whole country, Sir Pherozeshah richly deserved their gratitude."

The health of the guest of the evening was proposed by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Charles Armstrong, one of the leaders of the European mercantile community in Bombay, in a few well-chosen words. He said the name of Pherozeshah had been a household word for years. They knew him as a public-spirited citizen of the best type,

a fine speaker, an excellent debater and a hard fighter. They knew him also as a man with an excellent memory, with clear and decided views on every question and with an infinite fund of knowledge. In fact, as a citizen of no mean city, he was an easy first amongst many prominent and clever men. In those felicitous terms which he knew how to employ on occasions of this character, Pherozeshah thanked those present for the honour they had done him. He told them of an incident in his early career which was not generally known :

I remember that immediately after I began my career, I had to make a choice between entering public service—I mean official service—and entering, if I may so discriminate, the service of the public. It is not known even to some of my most intimate friends that very shortly after my return from England after being called to the Bar, an eminent member of Government—a most broad-minded man and a man of high liberal culture—sent for me and offered me the post of first-class sub-judgeship. It was a problem that I had to solve, for though I had joined the lawyer's profession, briefs were not too frequently coming in those days, and some of my friends taunted me that my income just enabled me to go to an ice-cream shop. But I unhesitatingly chose to enter the service of the public. And the reason why I am grateful to you for this gathering and hospitality is that you accept what I have done during the last more than forty years as showing that I have not entirely thrown away the years without doing some little and abiding good.

After a gentle dig at those who sometimes called him a revolutionist and sometimes an obstructionist in educational matters, Pherozeshah proceeded to say that the spirit which had led him to serve the public was the spirit which had been generated by the education which was one of the most precious gifts conferred upon the people of India by British rule. It had become a fashion to decry that education as godless, but without entering into a controversy, he would emphatically maintain that it had been the means of instilling a loftier and nobler conception of moral, political and social duties than had ever existed in this country. He concluded with a note of

appreciation of the spirit of cordial and harmonious co-operation which had always existed in the different communities in Bombay, and to which he owed a great deal of what little he had been able to do for the City.

On 23 April, Pherozeshah left for England in company with Lady Mehta, his second wife—his first wife, whom he had married before he left for England to study for the Bar, had died in November, 1907,—and had a hearty send-off at the Pier. The voyage was pleasant and uneventful, and Pherozeshah felt none of that sickness which had made his first sea trip such an agonizing experience. After doing Naples, Rome, Florence and other places, the party reached Paris on 1 June. On the Continent, Pherozeshah attracted considerable attention wherever he went. He had a presence which easily picked him out from a crowd, and dress and manner alike added a touch of distinction. His style of living and the Turkish cap he affected so impressed a hotel manager that he thought the distinguished stranger was the Shah of Persia!

He did not stay long on the Continent, for, with his tastes and habits, he soon got tired of sight-seeing, and he was anxious to get to London where his friends desired him to meet some of the leading figures in English political life. His arrival was prominently noticed in several London and provincial newspapers, and he received marked attention in quarters sympathetic towards Indian interests. The London Union Society entertained him to dinner at the Westminster Palace Hotel on 2 July. Many prominent men received him with cordiality, among them being three ex-Governors of Bombay—Lords Reay, Harris and Lamington, who were very glad to see the redoubtable opponent who had caused them in the years gone by so many uncomfortable moments. The Dowager Lady Lamington was greatly struck by the fact that he could converse so brilliantly on all manner of subjects in a foreign tongue.

There was one matter in which Sir William Wedderburn was particularly anxious to secure Pherozeshah's co-operation, and that was the ill-fated partition of Bengal. A Bengali deputation headed by Surendranath Bannerji and Bhupendranath Basu was to plead with Lord Morley the cause of their unhappy province, and a determined attempt was to be made to unsettle the 'settled fact.' Si

William feared that the arrival of a formal and public deputation would stir up all the mischievous activity of the enemies of Indian progress in Parliament and the Press, and he greatly preferred Pherozeshah undertaking the task and holding the brief for Bengal. In a letter written to Pherozeshah on 11 May from Vichy, where Sir William had gone to take the waters, he said :

On the other hand, you being in England for private reasons can have easy access to Lord Morley; as you are neither a Bengali nor a Hindu, there is not the defect of partisanship, while the unique position you occupy in India must give exceptional weight to your advice in a matter in which expediency is an important element.

Pherozeshah saw Lord Morley, and later on, his successor Lord Crewe, and had long discussions with them. He also met the new Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, who was particularly anxious to know at first hand the views of so eminent an Indian on the general political situation. On all of them, Pherozeshah deeply impressed the fact that the much-talked about unrest had been greatly exaggerated, and that the mass of the people was loyal to the British connection. The partition of Bengal had upset the mental balance of many, and had chiefly contributed to the wave of uneasiness which had swept over the land. It had unhinged the wilder spirits amongst the Extremists. The situation, though difficult enough, was to be viewed in its proper perspective, and could easily be handled by generous statesmanship. These interviews greatly strengthened the efforts which Sir William Wedderburn was making to undo what Bengali opinion regarded as a grievous wrong.

Another direction in which Pherozeshah exerted himself while in London was with reference to the settlement of the outstanding differences between the Hindus and the Mohamedans. The Mohamedan community, owing to its general illiteracy and the consequent weakness of its position, had hitherto pursued a barren policy, and kept itself more or less aloof from the currents of national life. The time had come for removing the more acute differences and bringing the communities closer together. Sir William was going out to India

as President of the next Congress, and the idea was to hold a friendly Conference in Bombay for the purpose of clearing the ground, and doing away, if possible, with the conflict of principles and interests which had so long kept the two communities apart. At the banquet given in London to the President-elect, Mr. Amir Ali and Pherozeshah formally mooted the proposal, which had the support of the Aga Khan as well. The outlook appeared to be hopeful, and Pherozeshah was confident that the Conference would bring about a closer feeling of comradeship. He himself did not expect to be present at it, though Sir William offered to postpone his departure from Bombay after the Congress was over, if Pherozeshah could return to the City a little sooner, and take the Conference under his sheltering wing.

Altogether, Pherozeshah had a very pleasant and profitable holiday, and did much to bring home to English statesmen the realities of the Indian situation. His personality lent prestige to the cause he was advocating, and greatly strengthened it. Active propaganda work he was, perhaps, incapable of, alike by temperament and habits. But, in the sphere in which he worked, none wielded higher authority, none commanded greater respect. He was not as widely known to the English public as was Gokhale, for instance; but on those whom he met, he left the impress of an intellect of unusual vigour, and a personality of magnetic influence. As the London correspondent of *The Times of India* wrote:

Sir Pherozeshah, having come here for rest, has done little public speaking; but in many ways he has wielded an important influence. He has had interviews with both the late and the present Secretaries of State for India, and also had a long conversation with Lord Hardinge before his departure to assume the Viceroyalty. Sir Pherozeshah's forceful personality, and his manifest sincerity of purpose, combined with his intimate knowledge of Indian conditions have much impressed the public men with whom he has come into contact, and in many cases have tended to raise their estimate of the Indian leader.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### A COMMUNAL CONTROVERSY : PHEROZESHAH AND THE PARSI 1911

PHEROZESHAH returned to Bombay in February 1911, and found himself in an atmosphere of fierce passions and animosities. For the first time in his many-sided career, he found his name on the lips of every Parsi, and his views and principles the subject of heated discussion in every Parsi home. The occasion was the election of three additional Trustees on the Board of the Parsi Punchayet,—a body which administers the charitable funds of the community—as sanctioned under a scheme framed after a protracted and costly litigation, which seemed to have brought to the surface all the bigotry and fanaticism of which the community was capable. The election of the Trustees assumed for a large section the importance of a life and death problem, and it was the one topic of conversation wherever Parsis gathered in any numbers. The orthodox party wanted the nominees of its own choice to sit on the Board of the Punchayet, in order to conduct its affairs according to its own pet notions, and to preserve inviolate the manners, and usages and superstitions handed down from generation to generation.

In this state of affairs, while Pherozeshah was in England, he received a wire in November from six Parsis, among whom were some representatives of the orthodox section, asking his permission to put forward his candidature. He consulted some friends, who persuaded him not to reject such an opportunity of serving his community, and under a belief that his co-religionists wanted him, he signified his assent. He did not know the exact position of affairs, and those whose duty it was to enlighten him before they secured his assent very reprehensibly failed to do so. A violent Press campaign was at once set on foot by his opponents, and when Pherozeshah returned, he found he was up against another Caucus, equally energetic and unscrupulous as the one which had attempted to

overthrow his supremacy in the Corporation. It would have been well if at this stage Pherozeshah had rescued himself from the unfortunate position in which some of his over-zealous friends and admirers had placed him and had declined to have anything to do with an office which had no particular significance and from which a section of the community was determined to exclude him. But, either from an imperfect realization of the forces that were arrayed against him, or because he was a fighter all his life, he declined to reconsider the position and withdraw his candidature. The result was a complete defeat, though his old colleague, Mr. H. A. Wadya, who had been put up as one of the rival candidates, and who did not feel very happy in the position he occupied, advised the electorate to vote for Pherozeshah in preference to himself. It was a foregone conclusion; it did not, at least, surprise those who knew anything about the organization of the so-called orthodox party, and who were aware of the ease with which the electorate could be manipulated under a scheme directly calculated to facilitate an overwhelming representation of the ignorant and the illiterate.

The defeat of Pherozeshah was hailed with exuberant joy by his opponents, and trumpeted in glaring head lines which proclaimed that the community did not want him, and would be quite happy to jog along without the assistance of the "Indispensable." It was intended to serve as a rude rebuff to one who was never tired of declaring that he was an Indian first and a Parsi afterwards. As a matter of fact, the defeat was in no sense a verdict of the community. The vast majority of the educated classes, the men of light and leading, voted solidly for Pherozeshah, and had it not been for the disrespectful elements in the electorate who could be bought, he would have emerged triumphant, despite the machinations of his puny opponents. The scheme of election provided ample scope for manipulation, and the victory went to the party with the superior organization and the less scrupulous methods. It was not a clean fight, and what was practically the only defeat at a poll sustained by him during his long and eventful career, could in no sense be regarded as the judgment of the community on its most distinguished member.

It would be useful to examine here in brief the contention put forward by Pherozeshah's detractors that he had shown himself

studiously indifferent to the interests of his co-religionists, and that he had given to the country what was meant for his community. It may be admitted that he felt very cold towards some of the questions which agitated the minds of Parsis, and which made them the laughing-stock of other communities, who could not understand the fanaticism and bigotry occasionally displayed by the most progressive race in India. He was positively hostile, besides, to the promotion of communal interests as such, holding that the fortunes of the Parsis were linked with those of other Indian nationalities. Nothing could have been more emphatic—and more distasteful to a certain section—than his famous declaration that a Parsi was a better and truer Parsi the more he was attached to the land which gave him birth, the more he was bound in brotherly relations and affection to all the children of the soil, the more he recognized the fraternity of all the communities and the immutable bond which bound them together in the pursuit of common aims and objects under a common Government.

But for all that, ever since the beginning of his career, Pherozeshah took a keen interest in the questions which affected the larger interests of the community. One of his earliest public appearances was at the time of the Parsi-Mohamedan riots of 1874, when, as has been related, he came forward boldly to protest against the conduct of the Government and the Police. The community had been thrown into a ferment over the manner in which it had been treated by those responsible for the public peace, and in the Press and from the platform, Pherozeshah scathingly condemned their weakness and want of sympathy. When some three years later, the question of the leadership of the Parsis arose through the death of the second Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Pherozeshah was again to the fore, and his lucid and convincing exposition of the need for a titular leader had not a little to do with influencing the minds of those who were opposed to the principle of the appointment, and entertained serious misgivings as to its practical operation. Again, when the community was thrown into a ferment over the attack made upon its honour in a report made by Mr. Ommaney, the Inspector-General of Police, to the Government of Lord Reay, Pherozeshah, as we have seen, kept a cool head and used his best endeavours to prevent his co-religionists

from playing into the hands of those who resented the action of that courageous Governor in connection with the Crawford inquiry, and who did not scruple to employ every device to discredit him. The role he played was very unpopular—the calm voice of reason is seldom appreciated in moments of excitement—and he was bitterly attacked in the columns of the *Rast-Goftar* and other Parsi papers. His view, however, was characterized by his usual sagacity, and it was not the first time that he found himself going against the currents of popular opinion.

The same sanity of judgment and independence of thought characterized his attitude towards the Rajabai Tower tragedy, which had created an extraordinary sensation in the community, and upset the balance of mind of even the thoughtful. Pherozeshah came to the conclusion that the two unfortunate women, who were the victims in that tragic affair, had lost their lives through an accident, and he did not share the general belief that it was the result of a crime of a particularly detestable character. When, therefore, the late Dr. Bahadurji went to him with a deputation, saying that the community would worship him if he took a lead in the matter, he declined to entertain the request, whereupon that high-souled but impulsive doctor left in anger, warning Pherozeshah that the Parsis would be greatly incensed against him for taking up such an attitude.

A more popular part was reserved for him when the Improvement Trust, some two or three years after its inception, notified the Chowpaty Street Scheme, which contemplated the acquisition of several of the properties vested in the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet. Representations were made by the latter, in which they submitted that the feelings of the community would be greatly offended if the lands were taken over as proposed. No satisfactory settlement was arrived at, however, and at the eleventh hour the Trustees decided to requisition the services of Pherozeshah. The Secretary of the Punchayet, the learned Dr. Jivanji Modi, thereupon saw him, and asked him to draft a representation. Pherozeshah declined on the ground that he had already been fighting the Improvement Trust over the question of the Chowpaty and other schemes, and that it was an invariable principle with him not to accept any professional engagement in a matter with which he had anything to do in a

public capacity. It was on that principle that he had refused the 'general retainer' which the Trust had offered him as counsel, thinking that it would interfere with the independent exercise of his duties as a member of the Corporation. Incidentally, one would like to know how many of our public men are capable of adopting that strict standard of public morality which Pherozeshah so strikingly displayed in these and other matters.

Though declining to mix himself up with the negotiations which the Punchayet was carrying on with the Trust, so long as he was fighting the battle of the public over the same question in the Corporation, Pherozeshah agreed to go through the correspondence which Dr. Modi placed before him. Into the subsequent stages of the matter, it is not necessary to go. Suffice to say that the Trustees of the Punchayet were not able to get the scheme modified in any material particular. There was an uneasy suspicion in the minds of many that the Improvement Trust had got the better of them in every way, and a loud demand arose for calling a public meeting to give expression to the general dissatisfaction at the manner in which the sentiment of the community had been flouted. Pressure was brought to bear on Pherozeshah to give his co-operation and support to the movement, and as the matter had passed out of the hands of the Corporation, he yielded, though he made it clear that it was a forlorn hope and that they were fighting a lost battle.

The meeting was held on 6 July 1902, for the purpose of memorializing the Trust and the Government against the acquisition of the lands vested in the Punchayet. The principal resolution was moved by Pherozeshah, whose presence in a purely Parsi gathering must have been a somewhat novel experience to one who seldom attended a Parsi meeting or a wedding or a funeral. The resolution stated that the deepest religious feelings of the community were concerned in the maintenance and preservation in their integrity of the properties in question, that the Chowpaty scheme was not an 'improvement' scheme as such, and that, in consequence, properties should not be compulsorily acquired unless they were grossly insanitary, and that the scheme should be modified in view of these considerations, particularly as the feelings of the community were certain to be seriously injured. The resolution was passed, and a

small and influential committee was appointed with Pherozeshah as one of the members to take the necessary steps to safeguard the interests of the Punchayet. The committee did the best it could under the circumstances of the case, and though it was too late to save the properties, it secured modifications in several important particulars. Its recommendations were accepted by the Trustees, and formed the basis upon which the properties were ultimately acquired.

Such were among the services which Pherozeshah rendered to the Parsis from time to time. They go to show, at least, his living interest in questions that affected their well-being, and dispose of the absurd charge that he was indifferent to the call of his community. It was a disingenuous cry manufactured in order to prejudice his candidature for the Trusteeship. The fact was that the part played by him at the time of the memorable Punchayet case some years before had greatly offended the extreme elements amongst the orthodox sections of the community. From the time of the Towers of Silence case in the seventies, which first brought him into prominence, he had had several opportunities of studying the constitution of the Board entrusted with the funds and properties of the Parsi Punchayet, and he had early come to the conclusion that the system of appointing the Trustees which was in vogue was injurious to the best interests of the community, and was in the nature of a usurpation of its inherent rights. His was the hand which guided the movement, which culminated in the long and bitterly contested litigation, which ultimately secured to the Parsis a privilege persistently denied to them. He was always proud of the part he had played in the matter, and even such a staunch exponent of orthodox opinion as the *Sanj-Vartaman* had admitted at the time that he had done a service to his community.

The action of the 'orthodox' party, which succeeded in keeping him out of the Trusteeship, was, therefore, as foolish as it was unworthy. By what strange process of reasoning, if reasoning there was, the electors were induced to reject the services of the finest intellect the community had ever produced, they alone could tell. A Calcutta journal was led to remark that the Parsis had provided no more characteristic farce for a generation, and we might well leave the matter at that.

## CHAPTER XXX

### A TRIANGULAR CONTEST—THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION 1911–1913

WITHIN a few weeks of the Punchayet elections, another notable contest took place, and Pherozeshah was again to be found in the thick of it. King George and Queen Mary were coming out on what proved to be a historic mission, and the honour of receiving the first Sovereign of England to set foot on the shores of India was one round which many hopes and ambitions centred. It was the turn of a Hindu member to become President of the Corporation. By a convention, adopted at first as a measure of expediency, the members of the different communities were appointed to the chair by turns. On the occasion in question, the Hindu candidate was Mr. Manmohandas Ramji, a well-known member of the community, who had rendered useful services to the City. Against him was pitted Sir Sassoon J. David, one of the merchant princes of Bombay, who exercised a considerable amount of silent influence in the Corporation.

When Pherozeshah returned from Europe, he found a hot contest in progress, and there is no doubt that the "Local Earl of Warwick" would have intervened as before, and settled the matter in his own happy and summary way. But for once, it was destined that the man who had saved the dignity of the Corporation on many such occasions by imposing his will upon rival ambitions, should himself be the cause of the bitterest contest for the presidential chair that had ever been seen. He was asked by over-zealous admirers to stand as a candidate, and in a weak moment he yielded to their importunities. The fight really lay between Pherozeshah and Sir Sassoon; the third candidate was very much in the position of the Irish 'bloc' in the House of Commons, too weak to challenge the supremacy of his rivals, but able to turn the scale in favour of either of them. The issue was very uncertain till the last, as the canvassing was very keen,

and there were several doubtful votes capable of being captured and recaptured several times over.

Considerable public interest centred round the election when it was known that the King-maker's authority was to be challenged, and his own passage to the throne was to be contested inch by inch. The contest proved to be very exciting, and the issue was left in doubt till the last moment. The election took place on 3 April 1911. Before the time fixed for the meeting, there was an unusually large attendance of members, and the gallery was filled with spectators. At the appointed hour, Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, ever loyal to his friend and leader, rose and proposed his election. He was seconded by Ibrahim Rahimtulla, who also was by the side of Pherozeshah on this notable occasion. When the other candidates had been duly proposed and seconded, the voting was taken, and after an agonizing suspense the result was declared as follows :

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta	26 votes.
Sir Sassoon David	25 votes.
Mr. Manmohandas Ramji	12 votes.

The announcement was wildly cheered by the crowd of people collected in and outside the Municipal Hall. The President on assuming the chair thanked the Corporation for the honour they had done him for the fourth time. He observed that when he was first approached in the matter, he seriously considered whether it was right and proper on his part to allow his name to be put forward. He came to the conclusion that if the Corporation desired to honour him, it was not an occasion when he would allow personal considerations to weigh with him, and that the best course was to submit to the judgment and wishes of his friends and colleagues. If the Corporation and the City wished that he should be their representative on a memorable and historic occasion, his feeling was that he would leave the matter entirely in their hands. Civic work was to him a labour of love, and it was through feelings of deep and sincere affection for the City that he cheerfully continued his labours. As an explanation of the reasons which prompted the King-maker to enter into a triangular contest for an honour, the bestowal of which had

been practically within his gift for a number of years, the statement was not calculated to meet the criticisms of those who looked upon the action as a grievous mistake. The comments of the *Bombay* correspondent of the *Capital* on the speech were brief and caustic:

The victor accepted the crown with mock-modesty, his heart fluttering the while with fierce lust of a triumph gained by a destruction of all the decencies of public life which he himself had helped to establish.

This may be regarded as an extreme view of the matter, and as partly inspired by a passion for linguistic effect, but there is no doubt the election did not evoke the universal approbation which the great services of Pherozeshah had called forth on similar occasions in the past. There were those, even among his admirers, who felt very strongly, that he would have been well advised if he had not yielded to the importunities of his friends. *The Times of India*, which had then come under the direction of a singularly able and broadminded editor, Mr. (now Sir) Stanley Reed, put the case very fairly when it observed:

The selection of Sir Pherozeshah for the office in what will be a historic year, secures that the city shall be represented by a distinguished figure, and one who has laboured hard for its welfare. Yet fully recognizing the value of his services, we think it would have been more graceful if Sir Pherozeshah had not offered himself as a candidate at the eleventh hour, and had remained aside in favour of men who had been less richly gifted with civic honours. The Corporation recognizes his great services, but it has not been backward in acknowledging them. It has given him a monopoly of its representation in the Legislative Council, even to the extent of disfranchising itself during his absence in England, and all members willingly stepped aside to make way for him when Their Majesties came to India as Prince and Princess of Wales. Worthily as we know Sir Pherozeshah will represent the city on this occasion, it is a pity that the King and Queen should be laid under the impression that there is only one fit for the

highest civic honour in the second city of the Empire, or that people should begin to think that Sir Pherozeshah desires to monopolise the civic honours that have been so cheerfully and ungrudgingly accorded to him in full measure in the past.

With a great deal of this criticism, it is impossible not to agree. Pherozeshah's candidature for the chair in the circumstances that existed must be regarded as the most ill-advised action of his career. His success brought him no accession of strength or prestige. His defeat would have been disastrous. The writer remembers discussing the matter the very evening the election took place with one of his oldest political associates. It was distressing to the latter that the man who had been so long the sole arbiter in the matter of the choice of a president, should himself have to find his way to the chair by a precarious majority of one after a hard and none too dignified contest. That was a feeling which was shared by many of Pherozeshah's admirers, who greatly regretted the position in which he had placed himself. But even Jupiter nods sometimes.

The address of the Corporation to Their Majesties was drafted by Pherozeshah, as were so many others on like occasions, and contained many felicitous touches. Emphasis was laid on the significance of the Royal visit. It was in effect a proclamation to the world of the position which India held in the Empire, and in the sympathies of the Royal House, and a demonstration that the Crown was "the living bond uniting many different races in varying climes under the flag which stands for ideals of justice, righteousness and progress." The same note had been struck by Pherozeshah a little while before in the eloquent speech which he had made at the public meeting held under the presidentship of Sir George Clarke for the purpose of concerting measures for the reception of Their Majesties. He did not believe it was a merely ceremonial visit, and he seemed to read into it a special significance.

When the citizens of Bombay met again on 3 February 1912, after the eventful visit was over, to give expression to their sense of the beneficent and far-reaching results of the visit, Pherozeshah, who was in the chair, re-called his glowing periods on the previous occasion, and claimed that he had been something of a prophet; and he



In a Parsi cap



At a hill station

thanked Providence that, working under good report and evil, for nearly half a century, with greater men, many of whom had passed away, he had lived long enough to be blessed with a sight of the promised land. Those who listened to the ageing leader on the occasion, and knew his enthusiasm and active interest in the preparations for according Their Majesties a fitting welcome, must have forgiven him the election he had been persuaded to contest, and felt that Bombay had indeed been worthily represented on a great and memorable occasion.

## II

Following upon the King's historic visit and while his message of hope was still ringing in the ears of men, came the announcement in July 1912, of the appointment of a Royal Commission to examine and report upon the Public Services in India. The personnel of that Commission, though not as favourable to Indian interests as it should have been, was such as to command respect, and the inclusion of Gokhale afforded a guarantee that its conclusions would not be of a reactionary character. Gokhale himself felt hopeful, and in a letter to Pherozeshah written before he left for South Africa, deprecated the general attitude of distrust of the Commission, and urged Indian leaders to put their case before it as strongly as possible. He was not a believer in Non-Cooperation. He was prepared to make the best of what he had got, and carry on the fight without sulking, without flinching.

When the Commission came to Bombay in March 1913, in the course of its rambles, Pherozeshah was examined on behalf of the Bombay Presidency Association, which had submitted an able and carefully argued memorandum on the questions under discussion. One of the most telling passages in it was the one in which it was pointed out with reference to the perpetual platitudes about maintaining Indian administration on English lines, that the real position was that Englishmen in India were generally strictly opposed to follow English lines in Indian administration. If, however, the memorandum went on to argue, by that somewhat nebulous phrase was meant the application of principles deduced from the most

advanced education and culture and the progressive experience derived from all ages and climes, then, English education would qualify Indians to apply them to Indian administration under the guiding statesmanship of England as well as, or perhaps better than Englishmen could, hampered as the latter were by the bias and prejudices engendered by belonging to the ruling race. It was a statement characteristic of Pherozeshah, and that it went home was apparent from the lively cross-examination to which he was subjected.

There was a larger attendance of the public than at any previous sitting, when the formidable Bombay leader appeared before the Commission, and those who came in expectation of a spirited encounter were not disappointed. The manner of the witness appeared to be a little hesitating at first, but as he warmed up to the task, he spoke with all his accustomed vigour and outspokenness. He was strongly in favour of simultaneous examinations for the Civil Service, and though he urged no arguments which had not been urged a hundred times before by him and by scores of other politicians, repetition did not rob them of their force. He attacked the existing system and showed up its weaknesses in a manner not suited to the taste of some of the superior individuals gathered round the table. Sir Murray Hammick of the Madras Council was visibly perturbed, and his irritation found expression in an observation which did little credit to his intelligence, and which caused a mild ripple of excitement. "I should understand from your remark that in your opinion it is far better that the English should clear out of the country at once." "Not a bit of it," quickly retorted Pherozeshah; "I have been one of the most staunch advocates of the continuance of British rule in India." After that, as may well be imagined, the sword-play between the two men became distinctly lively. Pherozeshah stuck to his position that English education would qualify Indians to rule the country as well as Englishmen, who were labouring under considerable prejudices, and he followed up that statement by observing that somehow or other there was a rooted dislike to the educated Indian in the average Civilian. The 'discontented B.A.' was the *bete noir* of most Anglo-Indians. As he told another member of the Commission, one reason was that probably educated Indians were

pressing too close upon the heels of Anglo-Indians and officials. He came to these conclusions very regretfully, he added, for he had the highest regard for the English people.

In answer to Gokhale, Pherozeshah dwelt further on the deficiencies of Civil Service rule. He repeated what he had often pointed out that able as English Civilians were, and possessing as they did many great qualities, they were, and they remained almost to the end of their career, ignorant of the ways, thoughts and habits of the people to a remarkable extent. Asked by Sir Theodore Morison about his views as to an indigenous system of education, he observed that he was for Indian culture, but he held that it could best be developed in India through English education. It was English education which had taught them to appreciate Indian culture as founded upon its history and its own literature. He had reverence for the Classics. Latin and Greek literature and history were valuable not merely for one-sided development, but as laying down principles for all development and all culture. At the end of his examination, Pherozeshah reiterated his conviction that simultaneous examinations were the only way of effectuating the solemn declaration that there was to be no governing caste in India. Englishmen could not possibly retrace their steps after the Statutes of 1833, 1853 and 1870. It was incumbent on them to bear in mind Lord Clive's saying, "To stand still is dangerous; to retreat is ruin."

The cross-examination lasted for some hours. The witness was combative, but courteous, and expressed himself very freely. He left no doubt in the mind of the Commission as to the point of view of the school of thought to which he belonged. His mental alertness saved him from the pitfalls prepared for him by the ingenuity of his examiners, and he succeeded in putting up altogether a very strong case.

The labours of the Commission materialized some two years later in a Report which seemed to please no one. The outbreak of a world war, which drew from India a magnificent rally to the cause of the Empire and its gallant Allies, profoundly altered the outlook, and gave new articulation to her hopes and aspirations. The publication of the Report was, therefore, singularly inopportune. The country seemed at one bound to be covering the track of generations, and to

be no longer content to march with halting steps towards a distant goal. The manner in which the Commission had dealt with the all-absorbing question of simultaneous examinations added to the lack of enthusiasm with which its conclusions were received. The Indian view of the case suffered greatly, besides, by the sad and untimely death of Gokhale. His capacious mind with its vast stores of knowledge, fortified by the experience and political sagacity of Pherozeshah with whom he was constantly in touch, would have illumined the pages of the Report, and made it a political document of the highest value. It was the one concern of his closing days. He had a prolonged conference about it with Pherozeshah in the latter's house the evening before he left for Poona, never to return. He was stricken down within less than a fortnight, leaving incomplete the last great task he undertook in the service of the people. With his disappearance, the Public Services Commission lost whatever title it had to the confidence of the country, and the Report, barring an able minute of dissent by Mr. Justice Abdul Rahim of Madras, proved utterly disappointing to a public hoping against hope for a gesture of true statesmanship.

## CHAPTER XXXI

## CLOSING YEARS

1911-1915

THE closing years of Pherozeshah's career were in some respects the most difficult period of his life. Struggling against physical infirmities and the encroachments of age, he was called upon to defend his position against the assaults delivered on it by an autocratic Governor, who found in 'Ferocious' Mehta the most formidable opponent of his reactionary policy. The question had to be decided, who was to reign in Bombay; the masterful leader who had so long dominated the Corporation, the Senate and the Council, or the equally masterful administrator who was apt to approach problems of government from the point of view of a military scientist. There were once two Kings in Brentford; there certainly could not be two in Bombay.

The stage was soon reached when the views of the two men came into sharp conflict. The struggle began with the question of University reform, and was carried into the Council, where the atmosphere often became uncomfortably hot. The situation was aggravated when Lord Sydenham thought fit on a notable occasion to silence his opponent by a rigid application of the 'time limit.' It was at a meeting of the Council held at Poona on 25 July 1911 that the incident took place. The annual Budget was under consideration, and the discussion had turned on the question of the powers of taxation of Provincial Councils. The Finance Member, Sir John Muir Mackenzie, had in the previous year strongly urged that the Council be invested with the requisite power to impose the taxation necessary to meet its requirements, and that the dependence on the Imperial Government be done away with altogether. That was the only way in which financial and administrative responsibility would be brought home to the Council and the people. As an abstract proposition, nothing could be more admirable, and Mr. (now Sir) Fazulbhoy Currimbhoy supported it at the Budget meeting the year

after. Pherozeshah, however, would have none of it. In his opinion, until the Council was so constituted as to represent the direct voice of the people, it was disastrous to invest it with any powers of taxation. He was not enamoured of non-official members. They were sometimes more official than the officials themselves. The honourable member went on to say some very unpalatable home-truths, whereupon Lord Sydenham lost his patience and interposed: "Two minutes more, Sir Pherozeshah." "Two minutes more!" indignantly exclaimed Pherozeshah. Well then, he said, he could not use the previous moments better than by protesting against such an exercise of discretion vested in His Excellency under the rules. To give twenty minutes to a member for a general debate involving all the heads of the Budget was simply to stop his mouth. This protest was followed up by a long letter to the Press, of which the autocratic Governor took occasion to disapprove at the earliest opportunity.

On another occasion, when a Bill for amending the Improvement Trust Act was before the Council, Lord Sydenham ruled out of order an amendment moved by Pherozeshah who, according to a newspaper comment of that time, "knew more about constitutional procedure than the whole box and dice of the Government of Bombay." When Pherozeshah protested against this ruling in the columns of the local *Times*, the Secretary to the Council sent him an elaborate reply, which was also published in the Papers, refuting in detail the contentions of the honourable member, and expressing the regret of the President "that a member of the Legislative Council should have thought fit to ventilate in the Press his views as to the correctness of a ruling of the President, to whom the rules give the sole authority to decide all points of order, and without whose consent no point of order may be discussed in Council." On the subject of the Bill for the registration of medical practitioners also, there was more than one passage-at-arms to relieve the dullness of the Council Chamber. The Governor had a sly dig at Pherozeshah's attitude on the measure at the conclusion of the debate:

The Honourable Sir Pherozeshah has attacked the Bill as a whole in one of his characteristically eloquent and vigorous speeches. He does not object to the clauses of it, but he objects to

the whole thing. In this respect he reminds me of the soldier who, when brought before a court-martial, was asked if he objected to any of the members of it, and said that he objected to nobody, but to the whole business.

Despite these perpetual differences and conflicts, there existed among the two men a feeling of mutual respect. It was characteristic of Pherozeshah that when the Governor on the eve of his retirement was elevated to the peerage, he paid the latter a handsome tribute, remembering what he owed to himself and the Council as Leader of the Opposition. It was not the first time he showed himself mindful of the conventions—which weaker men call the *hypocracies*—of public life, so often lost sight of in the dust and heat of political controversy.

With the retirement of Lord Sydenham and the advent of a Governor with liberal tendencies, Pherozeshah's power and influence revived, and he became once more the virtual dictator in public affairs that he had been for so many years. His prestige and popularity among the people had of course never been impaired. Whether out-voted in the Senate and the Council and defeated on large questions of policy, his supremacy had always remained unchallenged. Opponents who fondly believed he was extinct repeatedly found themselves disillusioned. A strong-headed ruler bent on shaping the administration after his own pattern had treated with somewhat scant respect his vast experience and unrivalled powers, and had sought to break his influence. But these efforts had failed to shake the hold of the dictator over a large section of his educated countrymen. With the arrival of Lord Willingdon there came a change over the spirit of the Secretariat. The new Governor, brought up in the vivifying atmosphere of the House of Commons, had the sagacity to recognize in the formidable critic of Government a most valued asset, and showed himself anxious to seek his co-operation on every occasion. Thus it came about that during the last two years of his long and varied career, Pherozeshah wielded an influence over the 'intelligentsia' almost as great as was enjoyed by him in his palmiest days.

His activities during this period were remarkable, and his mind

remained unclouded to the end. He spoke at public meetings with all his accustomed vigour, and there was no more vigilant critic in the Legislative Council. An instance of his mental acuteness will presently be referred to. Among his public utterances at this period must be recorded two notable pronouncements on the South African question delivered at public meetings held in Bombay in September and December, 1913. He declared he was one of those who had always stoutly maintained that there could be no justification for any part of the British Empire to deny to other parts the equal rights of citizenship. He had all along held that a subject of the Crown had a right of free entry and access to every part of the Empire. Englishmen had no justification for insisting on the policy of the open door in Asia, and the closed door in other parts of the world. On this fundamental issue, it may be noted, he was absolutely uncompromising. It was here he parted company with Gokhale and Gandhi, who, faced with an extremely difficult situation, had given on the question of principle, and had contented themselves with obtaining whatever terms they could exact from the Union Government to make the lot of the existing settlers more tolerable. Pherozeshah regarded this surrender as a cardinal mistake. He maintained that Indians could never give up the great and vital principle of Imperial citizenship. Time has brought about a striking vindication of Pherozeshah's point of view, on which such sharp differences of opinion existed at the time. The South African problem, in spite of all the twaddle about common sacrifices and brotherhood in arms to which Indians were treated while the German menace hung over the world, unfolds to-day the same old tale of injustice, arrogance and oppression, which have disgraced British Imperialism for a generation. Even the Smuts-Gandhi compromise seems to have gone by the board, and it is beginning to be realized that the Indian position would have been stronger if the principle of equal citizenship had not been sacrificed to the urgent needs of the situation.

Among his last public appearances on the platform are two which stand out, for different reasons. The first was at a meeting held in the Town Hall on 13 August 1914, to give expression to the feelings of loyalty and devotion which the War had aroused amongst large sections of the people. Pherozeshah presided and, on rising to

speak, was accorded a rousing reception. His voice was weak and he said but little; but it was one of the most memorable speeches he ever made. Its theme was that all political controversy should be hushed, and that, at such a critical juncture, the supreme consideration should be the obligation India owed to the Empire of which she was becoming more and more an integral part. Whatever one may think of it at the present day, it was a sentiment which faithfully reflected the mood of the Old Guard of the national movement and its following in the country. According to a newspaper report, it was "a great resolve expressed in noble words; it found an echo in every speaker who followed and it was greeted with unparalleled enthusiasm by the audience which crowded the historic Town Hall."

Equally solemn, but in a different sense, was the occasion on which Pherozeshah stood for, what proved to be, the last time on the Town Hall platform, trying to give expression in a broken voice to his sorrow at the death of a most valued friend and colleague. The fell disease against which Gokhale had struggled manfully for years at length cut him off in the prime of life when the country most needed him. He died while engaged in a solution of the momentous problems that confronted India at one of the turning-points in her history.

To Indians of all shades of opinion, the passing of Gokhale seemed to be nothing short of a national calamity. From every quarter came expressions of genuine grief at the premature termination of a great and noble career. Bombay gave fitting expression to her sense of loss at a very impressive gathering in the Town Hall on 5 March 1915. Lord Willingdon was in the chair, and in a singularly felicitous vein paid a tribute to the departed leader. When Pherozeshah rose to speak, looking forlorn and ill, and with, as it appeared to many, the shadow of death hanging over him, the pathos of the situation struck the audience. He spoke in a voice broken by emotion—the fire seemed to have vanished from tone and gesture—and sounded a personal note, which greatly touched all present. He expressed his inability to do justice to the life and career of that eminent Servant of India whose death they had met to mourn:

Even if I attempted to make a long speech, I feel I could not have spoken connectedly and coherently for the reason that I feel so sad, so depressed, so forsaken, advancing as I am in years, on seeing valued and beloved colleague after colleague dropping away from my side. Telang has been gathered to his fathers, Ranade is no more amongst us, Budrudin has passed away, our beloved Gokhale alas! has now closed his eyes for ever and for ever, and many others whom I could name, are leaving me one after another, forsaken and desolate. I feel almost alone in the stupendous work for the country which is still pending before us.

The speaker could not but recall with a keen sense of regret what plans Gokhale had laid down and what hopes he had entertained for the development and advancement of the country. Without his help, guidance and co-operation, Pherozeshah continued, he did not know how to persevere with the task which they had set before themselves. The speech was full of pathos and charged with deep emotion, and its conclusion was greeted with "loud and continued cheers in which Lady Willingdon joined, clasping the speaker's hands and congratulating him on his splendid utterance." Pherozeshah's moving tribute gave an emphatic denial to the stories current about the antagonism which gossip credited him with entertaining at the appearance of a rival near the throne. It would be idle to deny that acute differences had arisen between them on certain occasions, notably on the South African question, on which they held radically divergent views; but these differences were never allowed to affect their mutual regard and friendship. Indeed, even if Pherozeshah was inclined to be 'difficult,' the deep respect invariably shown to him by Gokhale was sufficient to disarm him. To the last, the latter maintained a close and intimate touch with his leader, with whom he had long and protracted discussions on several questions of importance which engaged his attention in the closing days of his singularly fruitful career. The Report of the Public Services Commission was then under discussion; the union of the two parties within the Congress was being debated, and Gokhale had conceived the idea, while in London in the Autumn of 1914, of drawing up a scheme of reforms in consultation with the Aga Khan and

Pherozeshah, and submitting it to Government after it had been approved by the Congress and the Moslem League. On many of the issues arising out of these questions, the two leaders were more or less in complete agreement. Considerable cordiality marked their last meeting, which took place at Pherozeshah's residence in Bombay. The writer happened to be present, and was struck by the warmth of friendly feeling with which the two men greeted each other. They were to meet again in company with the Aga Khan to discuss the all-important question of the reforms. Perhaps, the very last letter which Gokhale wrote was addressed to Pherozeshah, and related to the scheme which was uppermost in his thoughts and to which a passing reference must be made in this place. There was a difference of opinion between them on a fundamental point in the scheme. Gokhale favoured the idea of the German, Austrian and American system of a powerful executive, not responsible to the Legislature on the one hand, and on the other, a Legislature, directly elected by the people independent in its own domain. Pherozeshah was for development on the historical lines of the British constitution, and strongly favoured a system of responsibility through the Legislature. These conflicting views were never threshed out by the three leaders at a joint conference which they intended holding, and when the Aga Khan saw Gokhale at Poona, the latter realizing that his end was near, said he would draw up a scheme embodying his own ideas, and would leave it behind him as his last will and testament. This was done, and the Aga Khan received a copy a few days after, as also did Pherozeshah. But the scheme on which the dying statesman had set his heart went no further, for Pherozeshah could not overcome his objection to its central idea, and the War which was expected to be over by the end of 1915 continued to lengthen its shadow over the face of the earth. Ultimately, when the Aga Khan published the political testament of his friend, perhaps, as a corrective to the wild ideas which were seizing the minds of people, things had changed a great deal. India had taken vast strides, and a scheme which might ordinarily have satisfied the aspirations of her sons for a generation came to be regarded as timid and halting, and out of place in a new-born world throbbing with strange hopes and ambitions.

Pherozeshah's activities on the platform and in the Council were not to put a seal on his career. He had the good fortune of achieving towards the end of his life two objects which were close to his heart. One of them was the founding of a daily newspaper pledged to carry out the policy of his party. It was the fruition of efforts which had gone on in one shape or another for nearly a quarter of a century. *The Advocate of India* had years before been the medium through which Pherozeshah had attempted to carry on political propaganda, and he had assisted the paper and its editor substantially. The arrangement, however, had soon fallen through, and when the *Gazette* and the *Advocate* went over to the enemy, Bombay had to listen to the voice of the three English dailies chiming in unison and silencing every other note. At the time of the Caucus, when *The Times of India* was conducting an infamous campaign against the 'Boss,' it was felt as a serious disadvantage that there was no English daily to counteract its mischievous propaganda. A movement was thereafter set on foot to boycott the *Times*, and to provide Bombay with an organ of Congress opinion. Patriots, however, are often unwilling to put their hands in their pockets, and the project languished for want of the requisite capital. Later on, negotiations were conducted for the purchase of the *Bombay Gazette*, which, however, came to nothing, owing to the opposition of one or two of the Directors of that paper, who did not want it to go into the hands of a Party with which they had no sympathy.

Ultimately, Pherozeshah and his friends succeeded in launching a new journal into existence, and *The Bombay Chronicle* saw the light of day in April 1913. Edited by an exceptionally able writer, it soon became a power in the land. The firm direction exercised over its policy by Pherozeshah as Chairman of the Board, while it added weight and dignity to its expression of opinion, prevented it from straying into dangerous paths. Within a short time, it began to exercise an enormous influence over public affairs, and more than fulfilled the fond hopes of its promoters. Pherozeshah's interest in the career of his pet child was intense, and his control of its management and policy entailed an amount of trouble and anxiety which told on his health. But he cheerfully bore the burden, happy in the knowledge that he had at length provided Bombay with a

paper which mercilessly attacked cant, injustice and hypocrisy wherever it found them, and which became a sort of a terror to those in authority. When his strong hand was removed, the paper which he had done so much to create, threatened at one time to break loose from the principles he had laid down, and to be engulfed in the wave of militant nationalism which swept over the land during the great world-struggle for liberty and survival. It has since recovered itself to some extent, but one's appreciation of the ability and fearlessness with which it is conducted need not obscure the fact that it is pursuing a policy which its founder would hardly have approved of or tolerated.

To add to the anxieties consequent upon the foundation of *The Bombay Chronicle*, a financial crisis of a particularly severe character overtook Bombay in 1913, and for reasons to be presently stated, caused Pherozeshah no little uneasiness. The collapse of the Credit and the Indian Specie banks, induced by colossal gambling operations, threw the money market into a state of confusion and panic, and threatened to involve even well-managed concerns in one vast ruin.

The Central Bank of India, which Pherozeshah had helped to found at the end of 1911, suffered with the rest. Ably managed as it was by Mr. S. N. Pochkhanawala, the young banker who was directing its operations, there commenced a steady and continuous run on its deposits, which dwindled at an alarming rate. The position caused no little anxiety to Pherozeshah as Chairman of the Board. His name had inspired confidence in the public, and had materially contributed to the successful flotation of the Bank. It was due to his insistence that the Articles had been changed so as to give stricter control over the Manager to the Directors of the Bank in the interests of the shareholders. Its stability was, therefore, a matter of anxious concern to him. He was so keen on saving it from being submerged beneath the wave of panic which swept over Bombay that he went to the length of offering to deposit the title-deeds of his various properties, for the purpose of raising monies for financing the Bank. This gesture restored confidence in the Bank and helped it to tide over the crisis. Its subsequent career would have delighted none more than its first Chairman, who had all his life been as

staunch an advocate of indigenous enterprise as he was of an indigenous system of Government.

A bust of Pherozeshah adorns the entrance to the Central Bank, and arrests the eye as one enters the premises. It was unveiled at a general meeting of the shareholders held on 27 February 1918. Eloquent tributes were paid on the occasion to Pherozeshah's keen solicitude for the welfare of the Bank, his firm and sagacious guidance of its operations, and the strength and prestige which his association gave to the Bank, particularly during the dark days of 1913. If today the Bank ranks amongst the most successful examples of purely Indian enterprise, it is due not a little to the policy and personality of its first Chairman.

An event of special significance at this time was Pherozeshah's appointment as Vice-Chancellor of the University in March 1915. His connection with the institution dated back to the period when, on his return to Bombay after being called to the Bar, he was appointed a Fellow by Sir Alexander Grant, who was then Vice-Chancellor. During the long period that had elapsed, he had served the University with a devotion second only, perhaps, to that which he had shown to the Corporation. There was no greater champion of the cause of Higher Education, which he always regarded with an extremely jealous eye. To the University, as the temple of learning, he bore an attachment, which made him averse to any violent changes, or interference with its rights and privileges. For years, he fought with energy and determination the new-fangled ideas, which sought to establish that the whole of our educational system was a mistake which required to be rectified. In the Senate and the Syndicate, he resolutely stood up for the old order of things, with such modifications as time and circumstances demanded.

That Pherozeshah rendered the University distinguished services, in spite of a certain conservatism of outlook, cannot be gainsaid. And yet, they remained without any practical recognition till very nearly the close of his long career. Universities in other countries would have delighted to honour a man with a record such as his. Lord Sydenham, indeed, in his earlier days felt the reproach, and would have liked to have appointed Pherozeshah as Vice-Chancellor, provided he was agreeable to chiming in with the views of the

Governor on educational reforms. But Pherozeshah was unbending, and the idea was dropped. It was to the credit of Lord Willingdon that he seized the earliest opportunity of putting at the head of the University administration one who, though he could not be regarded as an educationist, was undoubtedly the most outstanding man in the Senate. The Bombay correspondent of the *Capital* thus traced the genesis of the appointment:

When Lord Hardinge last visited Bombay, he had a long private interview with Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, and I am told that one result of the 'pourparlers' was the consent of the Parsi Knight to become Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University, if the post were offered him by Lord Willingdon, the Chancellor. The Viceroy subsequently convinced the Governor of the expediency of a measure that startled certain dovecotes, which had no idea that Sir John Heaton would resign after a short reign of two and a half years.

The appointment gave widespread satisfaction. *The Times of India* wrote:

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta has taken a leading part in the life of the University for very many years, and has always stood up in defence of the rights and privileges of that institution. In doing so, he has been a leader in most of the contentious discussions of the past. He has never attempted to disguise his opinions, and for many years he has been looked upon as the accepted champion of a big party on the Senate. With many men this would have been a serious obstacle in the way of a successful career as a Vice-Chancellor, but we do not think it will be so in the case of Sir Pherozeshah. He will be the guardian of the University against any attack from within, and we shall be sorry for anybody who dares to underrate the strength of the University, or tries to hold it in contempt while he is in office. But in presiding over the deliberations of the Senate, we believe that Sir Pherozeshah will be rigid in his impartiality, and that being so, his influence for good should be enormous.

Other papers were equally appreciative, and the term of office of the new Vice-Chancellor was looked forward to with considerable interest. There was bitter disappointment, however, in store for all, for none more than for Pherozeshah himself. His health was fast growing worse, and he found himself unable to discharge the duties of his office. He could not preside over the deliberations of the Senate, nor gratify the anxious desire of a public, eager to know what he had to say from his place as Vice-Chancellor on the problems of higher education. His Convocation address would certainly have proved a remarkable utterance, as unlike the pronouncements of his predecessors in office as one could expect in a man so different from his contemporaries. But it was willed otherwise, and the helplessness of the situation preyed deeply on his mind. He once told the writer how keenly he regretted his inability to grasp the unique opportunities which had at length come his way as the administrative head of the University, and how this sense of helplessness was affecting his health and spirits. The appointment had come too late, he exclaimed with a tinge of sadness in his voice, and as the writer listened to him, he realized to some extent the depth and sincerity of his love for the cause of Education, to which he had devoted the best that was in him, and in whose service he had encountered some of the greatest difficulties and disappointments of his career.

Pherozeshah's disabilities were purely physical. He suffered from his old kidney trouble, and his heart was affected. The latter symptom caused his friends a good deal of anxiety. On one occasion, while addressing the Corporation, he stopped suddenly, and for a few moments appeared to be breathing with difficulty. Medical assistance was immediately available, but it was not wanted, for, to the intense relief of those around him, he began to revive after he had swallowed something which he kept in his pocket for emergency. As time went on, these attacks became more frequent, and caused considerable apprehension among his friends. Though Pherozeshah's health had broken down, his mind remained unclouded to the end. His perception was as keen as ever, and his indomitable spirit never left him.

It has already been remarked that the closing days of Pherozeshah's life were in a sense among the happiest. He was weary of

conflict and anxious to co-operate, and he found in the changing spirit of the times, and in the advent of a Governor with liberal ideas, opportunities for which he had long sought in vain. Events had happened, too, which could not but afford him genuine satisfaction. He had been able to promote a Bank, a genuine *swadeshi* enterprise, which had passed through difficulties and was now firmly established. He had founded a newspaper which had speedily become a power in the land. He had become the administrative head of the University which he had served with distinction for more than a generation.

That was not all. Two notable events which took place in March and July of 1915 were to gladden still further the closing stages of a long and dazzling career. The Corporation which was largely his creation celebrated its Golden Jubilee on 2 March, and it was a matter of infinite satisfaction to Pherozeshah that he had lived to see the day, and to be present at the banquet held in honour of the event. The brilliant gathering which assembled on the occasion received with enthusiasm the graceful reference made to him by the President, Sir Fazulbhoy Currimbhoy :

Of the great heroes of our municipal history, one is here to-night, Sir Pherozeshah, still full of fight and vigour, a kind of perpetual reminder to us that service to one's city and country is the most honourable of all things.

As Pherozeshah rose to propose the toast of the President, he met with a reception the cordiality of which could not have failed to touch him. It was in that very Hall that he had fought the bitterest fights, and won the greatest triumphs of his career. He had made many enemies ; he had estranged some friends. In the minds of those present, however, there was but one predominant thought, and that was the immensity of the debt which the City and the Corporation owed him. The speech was in his best after-dinner manner. The Governor, who was present on the occasion, had spoken of the brake often applied by the members to the progressive policy of the municipal executive. Pherozeshah in his happiest vein promptly replied to the charge, and pointed out that if the Commissioners were

liberal, it was, because they put their hands in other people's pockets, while the poor Corporation had to put its hands in its own! His Excellency, he added, had drawn an imaginary picture. It was only by close-co-operation between the Commissioners and the Councillors that the progress and development of Bombay had been rendered possible. This praise of his colleague and the executive did not, however, prevent the audience from realizing that the speaker had done more than all the Commissioners and Councillors put together to make the municipal administration of Bombay a model to the whole of India. Carlyle has said that all history is biography. While this represents but a half truth, it may safely be said that the history of the Bombay Corporation during the first fifty years of its eventful career is largely the biography of Pherozeshah Mehta.

In July, the Bombay University decided to confer on Pherozeshah the degree of Doctor of Laws, an honour which it had very sparingly and grudgingly bestowed in the past. The proposition was moved in the Syndicate by Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, and referred to Pherozeshah's "scholarship and his eminent public services ranging over a period of nearly 50 years, especially in respect of measures affecting the cause of local self-government, sanitation and education." Pherozeshah wrote from Deolali accepting the honour and tendering his thanks to the Senate. His venerable *guru* Dadabhai Naoroji was to be similarly honoured. It was a graceful, if very belated, recognition of the life-long labours of Pherozeshah in the field of education. Though not in any sense a man of profound scholarship, he had rendered the University meritorious services. The degree was never conferred. When the resolution was passed in the Senate, the shadow of death was already hanging over Pherozeshah, and he passed away before the honour was actually bestowed.

While there was so much to be thankful for in the final stages of the journey that was fast drawing to a close, there was a question before the country of considerable importance which greatly exercised Pherozeshah's mind, and in the settlement of which he would have undoubtedly taken a notable part, had his life been spared. It was the old question of the fusion of the Moderates and the Extremists. For some time past, a few leaders on either side had been actively endeavouring to find a common platform. After seven years

of wandering in the wilderness, the Extremists were anxious to return to the fold. As Pherozeshah and others had foreseen, they had discovered that so long as they were kept outside the Congress, their influence over the country was greatly circumscribed. They had made frequent attempts at re-union, and suggested various ingenious compromises ; but the firmness and sagacity of some of the leaders of the Congress, particularly in Bombay, had succeeded in keeping them at arm's length.

Latterly, however, there was a growing desire to make up the differences and close the ranks, and Gokhale, Madan Mohan Malaviya and others had shown themselves anxious to facilitate the admission of their opponents on terms which would be acceptable to them, and which would ensure at the same time the integrity of the Congress. By Article XX of the Congress Constitution, the right of electing delegates was strictly limited to certain recognized associations and public bodies. No one who did not subscribe to the creed, and was not elected by such bodies directly or at public meetings convened by them, could find admission as a delegate. The compromise favoured by Gokhale was that all associations which accepted the creed of the Congress, whether they were affiliated or not, should have the right of election, either at their own meetings or at public meetings held under their auspices. He was influenced by the thought that the Extremists were beginning to see things from a new angle and that a genuine *rapprochement* was possible. As he observed in a letter to Bhupendranath Basu written from Poona on 14 December 1914, a fortnight before the Madras Congress :

When Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and I and others urged at Calcutta three years ago that the right of electing delegates should be restored to public meetings, held under auspices which guaranteed the acceptance of Article 9 by those who took part in the meetings, we were under the impression that our Extremist friends in the different provinces had by that time seen the error of their ways and had come to realize that the only political work possible in the existing circumstances of the country was on the lines of the Congress ; that they wanted quietly to return to the Congress fold, but that considerations of self-respect stood in their

way, as they did not like to apply for election to those whom they considered to be their opponents; and that it was therefore desirable to so relax the rigidity of our rules as to make it less humiliating to these countrymen of ours to rejoin the Congress. We were also swayed in our attitude by the extreme desirability of taking an early opportunity to heal the breach in public life that had resulted from the split of 1907, so that the rising generation of the country should not have to grow up under the baleful tradition of that breach. And this was really my view of the matter till last week, and I was prepared to do what lay in my power to bring opinion round to it in the Congress, short, of course, of breaking with those whose lead I have followed or with whom I have worked all these years.

Before the Congress met at Madras in 1914, Mrs. Besant and several others came down to discuss matters with Gokhale. Negotiations with Tilak's party went on at the same time, and there was a talk of a Round Table Conference between the Extremists and the Moderates. All this while, Pherozeshah kept himself aloof, and disapproved of Gokhale's talks with the leaders on the other side. More than ever he felt convinced of the undesirability of union with a party whose policy he condemned, and whose methods he distrusted. Justification of his attitude was to come from Gokhale himself. In the letter referred to above, outlining the reasons for the efforts he had been making, he had at the end to confess to a bitter sense of disillusionment:

My hope was that if we enabled the seceders by such relaxations to come in, they would, having seen the impossibility of political action on any other lines, co-operate with us in furthering the programme of the Congress by present methods. That hope, however, has now been shattered. Mr. Tilak has told Mr. Subba Rao frankly and in unequivocal terms that though he accepts the position laid down in what is known as the Congress Creed, *viz.*, that the aim of the Congress is the attainment by India of self-government within the empire by constitutional means, he does not believe in the present methods of the

Congress, which rest on association with Government where possible, and opposition to it where necessary. In place of these he wants to substitute the method of opposition to Government pure and simple within constitutional limits—in other words a policy of Irish obstruction. We on our side are agitating for a larger and larger share in the government of the country—in the Legislative Councils, on Municipal and Local Boards, in public services and so forth. Mr. Tilak wants to address only one demand to the Government here and to the British public in England, *viz.*, for the concession of self-government to India, and till that is conceded, he would urge his countrymen to have nothing to do with either the public services or Legislative Councils and Local and Municipal Bodies. And by organizing obstruction to Government in every possible direction within the limits of the laws of the land, he hopes to be able to bring the administration to a standstill, and compel the authorities to capitulate. This is briefly his programme, and he says that he wants to work for its realization through the Congress if he and his followers are enabled to rejoin it, or failing this, by starting a new organization to be called the National League.

This frank statement of his policy Tilak supplemented by explaining that his purpose in seeking re-admission into the Congress fold was to strive for effecting such changes in the rules as would throw open election as delegate practically to everybody, as before 1907, and then for getting the Congress to endorse his programme by securing at its sessions the attendance of a majority of delegates of his way of thinking. To Pherozeshah, this exposition of the aims of the Nationalist leaders did not come as a surprise. He had throughout kept them at arm's length, uninfluenced by any sentimental considerations in favour of a united Congress. And he was determined that so long as matters rested with him he would save the Congress from being captured by the other side.

It was a critical period in India's history. Her partnership with the allied nations in the great world-struggle for freedom that was taking place on the blood-stained fields of France had established her claim to a place in the Commonwealth such as she had not

conjured up in her wildest dreams. It had given her claims strength and reality, and had lifted her demand for self-government into the region of practical politics. At such a time, it was a matter of supreme importance that the direction of the Congress should be in firm and sagacious hands, and Pherozeshah had accordingly given a mandate to two or three of his friends to arrange for the 1915 Session being held in Bombay, where he could control every phase of the movement. It was also essential that the national demand should be voiced by some spokesman, who could not only command the confidence of his countrymen, but could compel a hearing also from those in authority. Such a man was Sir Satyendra Sinha, now Lord Sinha of Raipur, ex-Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, and a man widely respected for his character and capacity. Pherozeshah felt that a better choice could not be made, and while everybody wondered at the selection of a man whose political record was insignificant, Pherozeshah had no doubts in the matter. He had invited the Congress of 1915 to Bombay, and he was determined to see that the conduct of its affairs should be in safe hands. So the invitation went out to Sir Satyendra. He declined at first; Pherozeshah wired "You dare not refuse," and the ex-Law Member had to yield. The rest is a matter of history. The President's pronouncement was characterized by a weight and dignity all its own, and was an able exposition of the aims and methods of the political school to which he belonged. The most notable feature of it, which did not receive much attention at the time, was its demand for a declaration of policy on the part of His Majesty's Government. In the light of subsequent events, one may wonder whence the Bengali lawyer derived the inspiration for that remarkable idea.

The Bombay Congress of 1915, to go on with the narrative, proved memorable in that it brought about the union of the two parties whom Surat had set adrift. When Mrs. Besant's proposals for the amendment of the constitution were referred by the Madras Congress to a committee, Pherozeshah had decided, as we have seen, on having the next session in Bombay. He was anxious to put an end once and for all to the manœuvres which had been going on for some years to effect a compromise which he regarded as mischievous, and he was confident that his personality and his influence in

Bombay would carry everything before them. With his passing, a few weeks before the holding of the session, the way was made smooth for the amendment of the constitution, and the Nationalists walked in. Their triumph was speedy and complete. When the next split took place, it was the Moderates who had to walk out. How far the history of these times would have been differently written, if the old lion had been alive, it would be idle to speculate. It is significant, however, that the union should have come about only when the strong purpose, the clear vision and the unbending will which had so long stood between the two contending factions were no more. With the death of Pherozeshah, the party he had so long led disappeared as a political force, and a tide of militant nationalism swept the country and drowned the voice of reason and moderation.

It was at such a momentous period in the history of India, and while his hand was still on the pulse of civic and national life that Pherozeshah passed away. It was his good fortune not to lag superfluous on the stage, and he died while still in the plenitude of his powers.

The first symptoms of a definite breakdown were noticed in June 1914, when his heart began to give trouble. His connection with the Central Bank at a time when it was passing through a severe financial crisis, and the close personal supervision he exercised over the conduct of *The Bombay Chronicle*, which he regarded as the last achievement of his career, had added greatly to the burden on his overladen shoulders, and told heavily on his system. Physically a nervous man, Pherozeshah shrank from an examination by any specialist, and treated the complaint with various nostrums suggested to him from time to time. A friend's recommendation had succeeded in inducing even an application of Oriental Balm! Gladstone once said of Bright that "he did nothing he should do to preserve his health, and everything he should not." That was in a sense true of Pherozeshah as well. He was extremely careful in his habits, and sometimes absurdly punctilious. And yet, when things went wrong, no man so trifled with his health as he.

After keeping out of Bombay for practically the latter half of 1914, he returned to the City in the January of the following year, very little better for the comparative rest he had enjoyed for six long

months. The death of Gokhale within a few weeks after his return caused him a shock, and kept him very depressed. In April he went to Matheran, and stayed there a couple of months. About this time, the old kidney trouble attacked him again, and caused him acute pain. On examination, he was found to be suffering from a cancerous tumour, and it was evident that the end was approaching.

The next few months were spent between Deolali and Poona. The only time he was in Bombay was for a couple of days in August, when he came down to attend the Convocation of the University. It was to be his first public appearance as Vice-Chancellor, and large numbers of people went to the Hall to see him. To the keen disappointment of everybody, Pherozeshah failed to put in an appearance. He had come down specially to attend the function, and it had been arranged that he was to take perfect rest, and to reserve himself for the occasion. Unfortunately, he took it into his head a day previous to go to a meeting of the Corporation. He was unequal to the strain, and he spent that night in pain and restlessness, which made attendance at the Convocation impossible.

Even in those days, his mind was as active as ever, and though it was not possible to maintain a personal touch with everything that was going on, in matters of importance nothing could be done without consulting him. None ventured to think he was a dying force. As a matter of fact, he was looking forward to the approaching session of the Congress at Bombay, where he hoped firmly and finally to establish the principles for which he had always stood. While in Poona, he had sought an interview with Lord Willingdon to fix up the site for the Congress, and the latter had very courteously acceded to his request to be spared the journey to Government House at Ganeshkhind, and had discussed matters at the Council Hall. This was, perhaps, the last active effort of the fast-dying leader. His condition speedily grew worse, and he finally returned to Bombay on 24 October. The Sunday after his return, he held his usual levee, and saw numbers of his friends at his place. That was the last they saw of him. His strength rapidly declined, and though he moved about the house and pursued his daily habits, and did not neglect even his elaborate toilet, he shut himself in and received no one. He never discussed his trouble, not even with the devoted wife who looked

after him with unremitting care. Though he kept somewhat depressed and silent, no note of sadness or despair escaped him. The fortitude which he displayed in these last few days extorted the admiration of the eminent surgeon who attended him in his final illness.

On the morning of 5 November, Pherozeshah rose as usual, took his coffee, and read his papers and correspondence. The doctors came at about 10 in the morning, examined him and found nothing very unusual. Shortly after they had left, he was seen standing near the bed, seized with a spasm of the heart. He said not a word to those who rushed to his assistance, but quietly allowed himself to be moved into the bed. Dr. Masina, who was one of the doctors attending on him, was immediately sent for and arrived at the bed-side within a few minutes. He spoke to the dying man, who answered him with an effort. Some brandy was administered, but it had no effect. A few moments later, without a struggle or a sigh, Pherozeshah breathed his last.

The news spread like wild fire through the city. Though the end was not unexpected, it came as a shock to most people when it did arrive. It was hard to believe that the towering figure which had dominated the stage for more than a generation was no more. As *The Times of India* observed, the last impressions of Pherozeshah's public activities were those of such a vigorous personality, and the place which he filled was so large that his death was a great shock.

Public sorrow over the event was profound and universal. The Municipal and University offices were at once closed, as were a great many other institutions. Almost from the moment the news became known, a continual stream of visitors called at the residence at Nepean Sea Road to condole with Lady Mehta and the family, and to have a last look of the departed leader. Most of those who had loyally followed him through life were there, many deeply and visibly affected. His life-long friend and colleague, Dinshaw Wacha, who was among the earliest to call, broke down with emotion, and while leaving had to be assisted down the stairs.

The funeral was most impressive, being largely attended by men representing every class of the cosmopolitan population of Bombay. Lord Willingdon was represented by one of the Secretaries to

Government. Everyone in the gathering looked grave and subdued, as if in the presence of a great calamity. As the funeral procession emerged from the house, people who had gathered outside bowed their heads in reverence. The cortege slowly wended its way, followed by an immense crowd, to the Towers of Silence, and as it came to the spot beyond which none but Parsis are allowed to go, Chandavarkar paid a warm and feeling tribute to Pherozeshah's memory. Dinshaw Wacha attempted to follow, but his feelings overcame him and he could not utter a word. Altogether, the homage that the people of Bombay paid to the departed leader was in keeping with the place he held in their hearts.

In the days which followed, in the Press all over the country and from a hundred platforms, attempts were made to give expression to the magnitude of the loss which the nation had sustained. Writers and politicians of all shades of opinion bore testimony to the personal and intellectual gifts which had given Pherozeshah the commanding position he had so long enjoyed. *The Statesman*, *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *The Englishman* were almost as appreciative as the most loyal adherents of his political creed. *The Bengalee*, which had been a more friendly but discriminating critic, wrote that a prince and a great man had fallen and a nation was in mourning.

The tribute paid by Tilak, coming as it did from a man whom Pherozeshah regarded as his bitterest political opponent, calls for special mention. "His supreme virtue was fearlessness. Once he made up his mind about some public question and defined his policy, he stuck to it with dauntless determination and no power on earth could dislodge him from his position. He never knew hesitation, equivocation or prevarication. His intellectual eminence, legal and constitutional acumen and political shrewdness, shone all the more brightly because of their foundation on resolute intrepidity."

At a memorial meeting held in London at Caxton Hall on 10 December, political opponents like Lord Harris, Ameer Ali, Bhowmuggree and Lovat Fraser, gathered together to honour the memory of Pherozeshah. The Aga Khan presided and spoke about "that great patriot's firm hold, amid all mutations, of the need for the maintenance of the British connection with India as an essential

condition of the march to Indian nationhood and ultimate self-government within the Empire." Lord Harris, who moved the principal resolution, observed that they had been opponents on many public questions, but he could say that while Pherozeshah was "a most resolute fighter, keen in argument and firm in adhering to his principles, he was as fair a fighter as he had ever met, either in England or India."

It was but natural that the loss which the nation had sustained should be most deeply felt in Bombay where, for over a generation, he had exercised a dominant influence over her many-sided activities. For more years than one cared to recall, there had hardly been a movement of any importance which had either not been initiated, guided or controlled by him. And Bombay had been supremely happy in the possession of her "uncrowned king." Through his personality and achievements, he had raised her status and importance, and secured her a pride of place in the country. Though regarded as an autocrat, the power he wielded had been exercised on the whole with remarkable restraint and judgment. It was, therefore, with a feeling akin to dismay that Bombay learnt that he was no more. And yet, the full import of the event could not be borne in at the moment of its occurrence. As *The Bombay Chronicle* observed:

The time indeed is not yet when we can adequately appreciate it. As the years go on, and we miss his guiding presence, his eagle-eyed watchfulness over the public interest, his fearless lead in the civic or political arena, his commanding personality and the healthy liberal atmosphere which he brought into every discussion or controversy, we shall look back to the days when he was among us and realize, perhaps, in its just measure, all that he did for his city, for his country, for the empire.

It is easy to exaggerate the virtues of the dead. Too often we find justified the witty adaptation of the old tag, *de mortuis nihil nisi bunkum*. In the case of Pherozeshah, however, the difficulty was to find words which would fittingly describe his many-sided career and personality. *The Times of India's* parting tribute came nearer than any other to being the most adequate. It spoke of his great services

to the people in many fields of activity and of the courage and resource with which he handled the affairs of the country in the critical days which followed the 'debacle' at Surat, of the spirit with which he fought, which reminded one of the best traits of English public life, of his unconquerable optimism and his unshakeable faith, amidst much wringing of hands, in the blessings of the British connection. It was, however, as "a great Bombay citizen" that Pherozeshah would be best and longest remembered:

In his devotion to Bombay he was, we think we may say without exaggeration, the greatest citizen any city has ever produced. He gave to it his best for over forty years. Nor, with the wider field now open to Indian publicists, and the growth of a more materialistic spirit, is he ever likely to find a successor . . . . It is a truism to say that no man in this world is indispensable. It is a humbling lesson to see how rapidly the places of the most distinguished men are filled. But with these thoughts before us, it is equally true to say that Sir Pherozeshah's place in the life of Bombay will never be filled . . . . We all feel the poorer by his death. The dauntless patriot and the eminent citizen will never be replaced; outside these great activities, thousands will mourn the death of a good friend and a very likeable man, one who fought hard, but fought fair, one who nourished a robust faith in the Empire and in the future of India in the Empire, and one who gave the best years of his life to the service of his country, and to the city which he was largely instrumental in raising to the status of the best-governed in India and the second in the Empire.

The remarkable memorial meeting of the citizens of Bombay, which took place a little later, provided a fitting culmination to the demonstrations of popular feeling which marked the death of Pherozeshah. It was held on 10 December 1915, in the *shamiana* which had been erected for the forthcoming session of the Congress; it was felt that the Town Hall would prove too small for an occasion which was expected to bring together the citizens in their thousands. Seldom has Bombay witnessed such an imposing demonstration of popular regard. Long before the hour fixed for the meeting, the

spacious *shamiana* was filled by a gathering of well over 10,000 people, representative of every community and interest in the cosmopolitan life of Bombay. Lord Willingdon was in the chair, and supporting him on the platform were Lady Willingdon, the Gaekwad of Baroda and a distinguished company of leading citizens from all parts of the Presidency.

At the outset, the Chairman read a telegram from Lord Hardinge, who desired to associate himself with the people of Bombay on this occasion. The message spoke of Pherozeshah as "a great Parsi, a great citizen, a great patriot and a great Indian" whom India could ill afford to lose, especially in the difficult times through which she was passing. The speech of Lord Willingdon was characteristically felicitous and generous in tone. It was marked by sympathy and true insight, and struck a personal note which admirably suited the occasion :

I remember very well when I first came to Bombay, having little acquaintance with Indians and no knowledge of Indian life, I had formed the impression that I should find in Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the principal and most powerful opponent of Government in its efforts to carry on the administration of the Presidency. But what has been my experience? I found in him a strong and resourceful opponent if he thought we were wrong, a warm and loyal supporter if he thought we were right, a fearless critic in his public life, but one who never allowed his public disagreement to interfere with his personal friendship. And in his private life, I always found him a true and loyal friend, a courteous gentleman, a man whom I have good reason to know was full of the warmest, deepest human sympathy. By his death I feel a real sense of personal loss, and if that be so, how much greater must the loss be to all of you who knew him so well, who had felt the influence of his powerful personality, and who can realize far better than I what strenuous and devoted work he did during the three score years and ten of his life for the welfare of his fellowmen?

The principal resolution was moved by Chandavarkar. The mover, in a speech charged with strong emotionalism, spoke of his

departed friend as "the Prince of Bombay citizenship," and as an imperialist imbued with the best and noblest traditions and genius of the British race and Empire. Mr. Birkett, who followed him, speaking on behalf of the British mercantile community, referred to his magnetic personality, great eloquence and untiring devotion to the interests of the City, and characterized his death as a national calamity. Ibrahim Rahimtulla declared that one of the greatest services which Pherozeshah had rendered to the British Empire was the strenuous effort he always made to guide the political aspirations of the people in healthy channels in a spirit of far-sighted wisdom. H. A. Wadya spoke next. He had known Pherozeshah ever since with the hopes and ambitions of youth they had set out together to fight the battle of life some fifty years before. He spoke of the great gifts which had given Pherozeshah a power which very few, perhaps, had ever approached, but which no one had surpassed in the country. He had exalted civic life in public estimation. In the field of politics, if it was the case that the better mind of India looked with increased confidence and higher hope to the future of the country under British rule, there was no leader to whom greater credit was due for this result than Pherozeshah. There was not a cause he espoused, nor an institution he served which he had not left the better and the stronger for his life's labours.

A number of other speakers followed. They rang different changes on the same theme, but each spoke with a feeling which seemed to be personal. Stanley Reed, the gifted editor of *The Times of India*, whose remarkable tribute in the columns of his paper bore testimony to the warmth of his admiration, remarked on the ardent patriotism, the keen political sagacity, the dynamic force and the mental alertness which were so intensely characteristic of Pherozeshah's life and work. Dr. Mackichan who followed spoke of the immense debt which the University owed to the great Elphinstonian, and the "massive influence" he exercised, "arising as it did from a strong personality enriched by an experience which was gained through strenuous labour and reinforced by strength of conviction and eloquence in expression."

As a demonstration of popular feeling, the meeting was altogether unique. Never had Bombay seen such a gathering of her

citizens. It was a tribute worthy of her and of the man who had devoted to her for more than forty years all that was best in him, and who had enriched and exalted her public life, and helped to raise her to the proud position of the first city in India and the second in the Empire.

## FINAL

FIVE years have rolled by since Pherozeshah Mehta passed away, five eventful years during which many of the ideals and principles which he upheld have gone into the melting pot. What would his position have been, if he had been alive in the bewildering times through which we are passing? Would he have lived to see his power and authority shaken, if not destroyed, or, would his personality have succeeded in stemming at least in his own stronghold, the forces which threaten to drive the country to perilous courses? These are speculations which may be pursued with interest, but without much profit. An appraisal, however, of all that the man was and all that he stood for may help us to a right understanding of the place he occupied in the political life of India and the position in which he would have stood today had he been still amongst us.

In assessing Pherozeshah's public career, it is essential to remember that many of his principles were formed by his early training and environment. He had the good fortune to receive his education at the hands of a scholar of great attainments and singular breadth of view. When he went to England, it was with a mind fully equipped to receive the ideas and impressions which the West has to impart. While studying for the Bar, he came under the influence of Dadabhai Naoroji, who inspired him with his own burning love of the country and enthusiasm for the cause of progress and liberty. The young disciple was deeply interested in the world around him, and the social and political forces that were at work. He came under the influence of the liberalism of the times, and his faith in its principles remained unimpaired to the end, despite many disappointments. It was 'an agitated and expectant age,' as Mr. Gladstone called it, and its teachings deeply impressed themselves on his youthful mind.

Pherozeshah's temperament, equally with his early training, was a great asset. He was a robust optimist, and he faced the problems of the day with serene courage and confidence. The hatred of enemies, the indifference of friends and the hostility of those in power and

authority failed to shake his faith in the ultimate triumph of the cause he had espoused, and in the principles and methods by which he pursued it.

His literary tastes fostered this outlook on life. Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson and the Bible were his favourites, and he carried these old friends with him wherever he went. In a conversation which he had shortly before his death with Chandavarkar, he said: "There is some solace in life, isn't there, when you call a small company of books like that your friends who have stood by you all through?" Referring to Tennyson, he went on to observe:

*Locksley Hall* is my favourite: in *Locksley Hall and Sixty Years After*, you miss the fire and hopefulness and courage; it sounds like an old man's tale of murmur that the world has not behaved well with him . . . . I prefer the Tennyson of *Locksley Hall*, the poet of youth and middle age with a hopeful outlook on life, who saw the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be.

It was this cheery optimism which sustained Pherozeshah through all difficulties and disappointments in his long and arduous career. It sustained him through the early struggles of the Congress, when he and his associates had to contend with hostility and ridicule on the one hand, and indifference and backsliding on the other. It sustained him through the dark and anxious days which followed the Partition of Bengal, when despair and despondency seized men's minds, and turned them aside from the paths of peaceful evolution. It sustained him through the grave crisis in national affairs precipitated by the *debacle* at Surat. Through all these difficult and often critical situations, while other men shrank back or wavered, he never lost heart, never felt shaken in his allegiance to the ideals and principles which he had made his own.

He was a firm believer, like many others of his generation, in the benefits of the British connection. No man more mercilessly exposed the defects, shortcomings and injustice which have often characterized the British administration of India, no man more courageously fought for the enlargement of the rights and liberties

of the people. And yet, there was none who upheld the British connection more stoutly than he, recognizing as he did the weakness of his country's position, and the essential justice and humanity, despite many lapses, of England's rule in India. Allied to this, was his deep-seated respect for constituted authority, which his early training had implanted in him. This was most strikingly exemplified in his civic career. While there was no critic of the administration more feared than he, the executive officers had no warmer supporter of their prestige and authority.

The distinguishing traits of Pherozeshah's methods of controversy were fearlessness, a keen sense of fair play and a regard for the decencies of public life. He hit out with refreshing vigour, but his denunciations were singularly free from mere aggressiveness or cheap rhetoric. His strength lay in the directness and uncompromising independence with which he expressed himself. From the days of Sir James Westland with his famous outburst about the introduction of the 'new spirit,' officials in the Councils learnt to treat Pherozeshah with wholesome respect. Sometimes, however, they allowed their irritation to overcome them and lead them to personal attacks, as was done by Sir Fredrick Lely and Mr. Logan in the Bombay Council on occasions well remembered by all who witnessed the encounter. They never ventured to repeat the experiment, for the trouncing they got was not easily to be forgotten. And yet, in spite of the fact that Pherozeshah spent all his life in giving and receiving hard blows, he did not allow his sense of fair play to be blunted. He never hit below the belt. On the rare occasions on which he allowed himself to be carried away into making a hasty statement, he withdrew it as soon as his attention was drawn to its unfairness. He scrupulously observed the best traditions of public life, and was not wanting in generous appreciation of his opponents, whenever the occasion demanded it. The readiness with which he acknowledged their good intentions, and met all attempts at co-operation or conciliation was in striking contrast to the general tendencies of the time.

The maturity of thought Pherozeshah showed at an early age was remarkable. The views which he expressed on educational problems when quite a young man were the views from which he found no

occasion to differ throughout his career, and they invite comparison with his latest reflections on the subject. His thoughts on municipal reform when he was barely twenty-five betray the same maturity of mind, and might be said to be actually embodied in a municipal constitution which in its essentials has survived for fifty years. So also with his views on reforms in the Civil Service, and the benefits of India's participation in party politics. In all this, he was often largely in advance of his times, and in conflict with the opinions of men older and more experienced than himself.

The qualities which may be said to have contributed most to Pherozeshah's supremacy in public affairs were his intuitive judgment and his firm grasp of principles. His career provides many instances—his views on the Press Act and the South African problem are among the most recent—of his political sagacity and the gift he had of seeing further than any of his contemporaries. It was largely owing to this that his colleagues often subordinated their views to his, even when they felt he was in the wrong. They invariably found that his judgment was sounder, his instinct surer.

For those who would lead their fellow-men through the dust and heat of political controversies, a certain gift of speech is more or less essential. Pherozeshah possessed it in ample measure. His oratory was characterized by considerable variety. The sonorous eloquence of his set speeches had a mid-Victorian flavour. It delighted the crowds who hung on his words on the Congress platform or in Town Hall. But his strength did not lie in that. There were other men, notably Surendranath Bannerji and Lal Mohun Ghosh, who excelled him in sheer eloquence. None, however, approached him, except at a respectful distance, in powers of debate, in the swift, decisive and masterly manner in which he floored an opponent. Quick to see the weak points of the case against him, he brought to bear on them all the resources of a capacious and well-trained intellect, and banter and ridicule generally finished what arguments left unaccomplished. Men felt themselves helpless as they listened to him and got convinced, sometimes against the evidence of their own senses. Thus it was he bore down all opposition, whether on the floor of the University and the Corporation Hall, or in the Subjects Committee of the Congress, where he encountered some of the finest intellects in

the country. People spoke of him as an autocrat. Perhaps he was, but when we see so many lesser men trying to lay down the law, we can appreciate the moderation with which, on the whole Pherozeshah wielded the immense power which he enjoyed.

An ardent lover of progress and liberty, Pherozeshah was strongly conservative in his outlook on some of the problems of the day. The love of ordered progress which his well-balanced mind and early training instilled into him, made him averse to all violent or sudden changes. Deeply imbued with the teachings of English history, he had a profound reverence for constitutional forms, and an abiding faith in the virtue of gradual and peaceful evolution, of "freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent." Always making the most of what he got, even if, as invariably happened, it fell short of what he had fought for, he set himself immediately to prepare for the next advance. He did not worry about the distant goal, but strove for what he thought the country was prepared for and had a right to demand, never doubting it would achieve its destiny in the process of time.

Pherozeshah was far and away the greatest political leader India had known. He never appealed to the masses as did Dadabhai Naoroji or Tilak, for instance. His hold was mainly over the educated and thinking section of the people. His impressive presence, personality and powers of mind dominated all who worked with him or followed his lead. As was observed of Gladstone, "when he spoke, he uplifted debate from whatever rut of mediocrity it may have fallen into. That was the power of the orator. When he sat silent, his mere presence communicated to the House a sense of dignity and a moral strength easier to feel than to describe. That was the quality of the man." It was remarkable how the many gifted men with whom he was associated in various spheres of public life allowed their will and judgment to be subordinated to his. The wail of the Punjab delegate that his personality dominated everybody faithfully represented the feelings of those who often differed from him, and yet found themselves helpless in his presence.

This supremacy becomes all the more remarkable when we think of the men over whom it was exercised. There were some who were in no way inferior to Pherozeshah in vigour of intellect; there were

others who closely rivalled him in gifts of speech and independence of character. There was none, however, who combined in him so many of the qualities which compel the admiration and command the allegiance of one's fellow-men, and in that, apart from that undefinable something called personality, must be found an explanation of Pherozeshah's dominance over all who came in contact with him. There were men who occupied themselves in his later days with instituting comparisons between him and Gokhale. Nothing could have been more foolish. The truth is that each did work complementary to that of the other, and what the other was probably not capable of accomplishing, Gokhale certainly could not have roused, as well as Pherozeshah did, the intelligentsia of the country from the apathy and even hostility with which a large section of it regarded the national movement. Gokhale could not have stood up as resolutely and as courageously as Pherozeshah did against injustice, oppression or autocracy. On the other hand, Pherozeshah was temperamentally incapable of the active and sustained educative work which Gokhale did from day to day, and the propaganda he carried on both in England and in India, and which owed its success as much to his high character as to his attainments. Comparisons between two such men are meaningless. Each was great in his own sphere, and together they made a notable contribution to the building up of the New India of which Dadabhai Naoroji had laid the foundations nearly fifty years ago.

The question has often been asked, what would Pherozeshah have done had he been alive today? Over and over again in these five years have his speeches and writings been recalled by Extremists and Moderates alike, and curiously enough both sets of political opinion have claimed him as their own. In that, perhaps, one may find an explanation of his real position in politics. In his optimism, in his faith in the benefits of the British connection, and in his firm adherence to the methods of constitutional agitation, he belonged to the Moderates. In the vigour of his utterances, in the uncompromising independence of his attitude towards questions of principle, and in the tenacity and fearlessness with which he fought, he was a man after the heart of the Extremist. It is impossible to believe that with a leader of such eminence, the Moderate Party would have

been what it is today, a sober and healthy element, no doubt, yet wanting in the daring and determination which make for leadership. It is equally arguable whether the Extremist Party could have captured the youth of the nation, and won it over to a gospel of bitter antagonism had a leader of Pherozeshah's authority and consummate art in the management of men been alive. That he would have been an uncompromising opponent of Gandhi's political philosophy—barring, of course, its negative aspect of raising the moral tone of the nation by teaching it discipline and self-sacrifice—no one can doubt. A believer in modern progress, he would have refused to subscribe to a doctrine which seeks to cure the ills of society by a reversion to the primitive concept of life; which propagates boycott of a system of education that has produced our greatest men and given strength and reality to our demands, and which is calculated to divert the energies of the best of India's manhood from such forms of purposeful activities as have made for national progress.

What M. R. Jayakar said about the matter may well be quoted. After saying that Pherozeshah's life would long remain a landmark in India's political history, he went on to observe :

The few years which have elapsed since his death have seen a wonderful change come over this country. Perhaps, he would have been himself staggered, if he had lived to witness it. What his own attitude would have been now it is difficult to say, as it is profitless to surmise. One can only say that, with his characteristic freshness and vitality, he would perhaps have suited his leadership to the growing requirements of his countrymen, or else he would have stood aside from the mighty current, staggered at its volume, perhaps rejoicing at its depth, but unable to keep pace with its velocity.

As Disraeli's biographer has remarked, "there is no need to labour further what is written broadly over the record which has been here presented." Sufficient has been said about the personality of the subject of this biography and his place in the national movement. Already other forces are at work, other men have emerged.

And it may be that Pherozeshah's memory may become dimmed in the fast-changing political atmosphere of the country. When the dust of controversy has settled, however, we may confidently leave to the judgment of history the achievements of the man and his impress upon the times in which he lived.



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